The last five essays explore Woolf’s complicated alternatives to textual traditions within deviant modernisms. Allyson Salinger Ferrante, Jody Rosen, Andrea Yates, Jennifer Parrott, and Sara Villa turn to Woolf’s textual tropes, analyzing them as a means through which Woolf dislodges normalizing culture. They study the fantastic, the critic, criticism, Woolf’s relationship to Sir Walter Scott, and Woolf’s ideas for a deviant canon.

Woolf’s attention to deviancy, her methods of bringing deviancy to the fore, and her own textual deviancies show Woolf’s writings as part of the modernist work that Colleen Lamos, whose analysis concentrates on sexual disruptions, identifies as “compelled and shaped by the contemporary turmoil” (9). Brenda Silver observes of late 20th-century culture, “Woolf has become the site of conflicts about cultural boundaries and legitimacy” (3). Studying Woolf’s own presentation of deviancy in her culture is vital, since Woolf’s challenge to her own culture’s construction of deviancy anticipates, I believe, the later “conflicts.” Woolf, poignantly ahead of her time, grappled with issues of deviancy, which, Silver suggests, reappear in the late 20th-century “debates” to which she is now central: “debates about art, politics, sexuality, gender, class, the ‘canon,’ fashion, feminism, race, and anger” (3). This issue of the Miscellany shows Woolf grappling with all kinds of deviance. She, as does the woman in A Room of One’s Own, places herself outside, with “a sudden splitting off of consciousness,” the “civilization” to which she is “alien” and of which she is “critical” (169).

Georgia Johnston
Saint Louis University

Works Cited
CALL FOR PAPERS
17th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf: Art, Education and Internationalism
The 17th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf will take place Thursday, June 7, through Sunday, June 10, 2007, at the Marcum Conference Center of Miami University of Ohio, in Oxford, Ohio, USA.

We welcome proposals for academic presentations, roundtable discussions, and creative performances on the conference topic of Art, Education, and Internationalism. Proposals presenting diverse perspectives on the following topics are especially encouraged:

- Peace, War, and Pedagogy; Public Discourse and the Artist; International Perspectives on Woolf Studies; Virginia and/or Leonard Woolf as Political Philosophers; Woolf and Postcolonial Studies; The Ethics of Art in Wartime; Woolf and the Translocal; Woolf in/and Translation; Heteronormativity and Institutional Politics; Woolf and Political Rhetoric; Art, Fascism, and Anti-Fascism; Woolf and Cultural Capital in Academe; Woolf, Cosmopolitanism, and Education; Teaching Woolf and Feminist Rhetoric.

To propose an individual presentation, send a cover sheet with your name, title of your presentation, address, email address, and phone number. On a separate page, include the title of your presentation and a 250-word abstract of the presentation.

To propose a panel, send a cover sheet with the title of your panel, presentation titles and contact information for each panelist, and a brief description of the panel topic. Include on separate pages titles and 250-word abstracts for each presentation. We welcome submissions by those affiliated with academic institutions and “common readers” alike.

Send proposals by January 8, 2007 via email to detlofmm@muohio.edu or via mail to Woolf 2007 Conference, English Department, 356 Bachelor Hall, Oxford, OH 45056. Electronic submissions are preferred.

The conference will be connected to the Miami University English Department Graduate Summer Institute—a program offering graduate credit for students who attend a pre-conference summer session seminar taught by Diana Royer and Madelyn Detloff. Students who wish to receive more information about the Summer Institute should send their contact information to English@muohio.edu indicating that they wish to be placed on the Graduate Summer Institute Mailing List.

The conference will sponsor a travel fund for attendees needing financial assistance. For information see the conference website: www.muohio.edu/woolfconference.

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*Bonne Kime Scott

*These contributions have been selected for this issue of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* by Georgia Johnston.

2007 UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND CULTURE SINCE 1900

Panel Title: Virginia Woolf: War, Triviality, History

Presenter: Erica Delsandro, Washington University, St. Louis

“Queer Temporalities in *Between the Acts: Haunting and Performance*”

Presenter: Jessica L. Williams, University of Georgia

“Thrift Store History: Restaging the Scraps, Orts, and Fragments of *Between the Acts*”

Presenter: Elizabeth Outka, University of the South (Sewanee)

“War and Window Shopping in Woolf’s *Night and Day*”

THE IVWS & VWS ARCHIVE

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Karen Levenback, Past President of the VWS, Melba Cuddy-Keane, Past President of the IVWS, and Carmen Königsreuther Socknat, Head of Bibliographic Services at Victoria University E.J. Pratt Library, Victoria University, University of Toronto, the archive of the VWS and the IVWS has at last found a secure and permanent home. The archive is now officially housed in the collection. All archival materials should be sent to the IVWS Historian-Bibliographer who will then arrange the transfer of materials.

MLA 2006 IN PHILADELPHIA

The Panels:

Thursday, December 28

131. Street Life: Virginia Woolf and Public Spaces

8:30-9:45 a.m., Grand Ballroom Salon I, Philadelphia Marriott

Program arranged by the International Virginia Woolf Society

Presiding: June Elizabeth Dunn, Graduate Center, City Univ. of New York

1. “‘An Elegy Played among the Traffic’: Motorcars in Mrs. Dalloway,” Lisa L. Tyler, Sinclair Community Coll., OH

2. “‘I Salute Thee; Passing’: Generic Hybridity and Urban Space in Woolf’s *Ode Written Partly in Prose.***” Adam Hammond, Univ. of Toronto


Respondent: Vara S. Neverow, Southern Connecticut State Univ.

Saturday, December 30

701. Re-reading Trauma in Woolf’s Fiction En(Corps)

12:00-1:15 p.m., 203-A, Convention Center

Program arranged by the International Virginia Woolf Society

Presiding: David Eberly, Boston, MA

1. “‘There Was an Emptiness about the Heart of Life’: Traumatic Shock, World War I and *Mrs. Dalloway***,” Jane C. Lilienfeld, Lincoln University, MO

2. “‘The ‘To Come’, Reading Trauma in *To the Lighthouse***,” Andrea Yates, University of Rhode Island

3. “*The Waves* as Ontological Trauma Narrative: The Anxiety of a Death (Un)Forseen,” Suzette Ann Henke, University of Louisville

The Party:

Come One Come All to the Woolf Society Party

We are fortunate that Mort and Annette Levitt have opened their lovely home to us.

Address: 232 S. 21st Street

Time: December 28, beginning at 6:30 PM

One suggestion that was made at the informal Society meeting in Birmingham was that each veteran of previous Woolf parties should make a special point of inviting a newer Woolf scholar to attend. Look for further announcements of a walking group to form outside the Marriott at Woolf sessions.

Directions: (starting at the Philadelphia Marriott 1201 Market St.)

This should be a pleasant 20 minute walk, or a very quick ride. Buses run on Walnut.

Walk 3 blocks south of Market Street (away from the Convention Ctr) on 12th Street to Walnut Street. Turn right on Walnut and walk about 10 blocks to 21st St. Turn left and walk 2/3 block to the Levitts’ house, which is blue/green in color. You will be passing Rittenhouse Square en route and can walk around it to Locust if you care to, in which case you should turn right when Locust comes to 21st St. for the final approach.

RSVP to Bonnie Scott by Dec. 26 if at all possible: bkscott@mail.sdsu.edu; last minute calls to 619-922-7161.
As Don Blume says of his inspiration for the work: “My art grows out of my experiences as an English professor and literary scholar. While Melville’s novel has captured my artistic interest because of its literary brilliance and cast of iconic characters, my artistic engagement with Woolf’s book stems from my ongoing literary research into the significance of George Mallory, the hero but ill-fated Everest mountaineer, to Woolf’s vision.” If you desire more information, Don asks that you contact him at rcblume@snet.net.

**MASKS**

Below are images from Don Blume’s recent exhibit, “Literary Encounters in Clay: Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* and Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse.*” The exhibit ran from February 24th through March 10th, 2006 at the Farmington Valley Arts Center in Avon, Connecticut. The masks of Virginia Woolf range from 16 to 19 inches high and the mask of Lytton Strachey comes in at 23.5 inches.

**SUICIDE**

As she walked across that flat meadow toward the river, as she plodded through the wet soil under a slate grey March sky, out away from the village and her neighbors, what was she thinking? Was she smiling to herself a bit in anticipation? Savoring a last glimpse of the sky and the bare farmland around her, glancing up to look back, but then thinking “no,” straightening her shoulders under the fur collar of her coat.

If she was happy that day, it was because she knew today would finally defeat her oldest foe. She knew she was cycling back underwater with the virus, undermining her strength. It had been wearing her down all winter.

She recognized that old enemy now, when their home in London had been destroyed, when nightly bombing raids flew over their cottage in Sussex. She lay in her bed listening to them, night after night. She’d just finished *Between The Acts* on the heels of her biography of Roger Fry. The anxiety of finishing a book had always made her vulnerable, and sure enough now that old enemy crept back into her bed.

England was alone then. The US had not yet entered the war. France had collapsed under the Nazi juggernaut, and Hitler had yet to send tanks racing across the Soviet Union to open second front. The full force of Nazi Germany was thrown against Britain nightly, and that threat was made to her, in her house, in her bed, nightly.

There she lay, waiting, listening for the explosions. She didn’t pray; she didn’t believe in God, but she could not push away the fear. Fear about her book, fear of illness, fear of bombs, fear of invasion. That fear infected her like a virus, undermining her strength. It had been wearing her down all winter.

She and Leonard had prepared for invasion. Her brother Adrian had given them a supply of morphine, which was a relief. They also had the option of letting the carbon monoxide from the running car motor do its work as they waited in their garage. Their cottage was marching distance from the southern coast, so when the Nazis landed for the inevitable invasion, Monks House would be directly in their path. Leonard was Jewish, she a well-known pacifist and intellectual; the Nazis had lists. She would wake to the banging on the door first, the heavy footsteps and shouting first—not a wireless broadcast, not a warning bell from the church, not even a telephone ringing to warn them. She’d be asleep when they came, vulnerable, undressed, blinking blindly in the light of their torches. There she lay with her fear nightly, knowing this might be the night she’d wake to see the Nazi boots at her bedside.

She tried to imagine life without Leonard, if they took him from her but left her alive, or how it would feel to not know whether he was dead. She knew she could not live without him. Living without Leonard would be like trying to live without her hands.

All of Britain was mobilized to rally the peoples’ spirit. Running away, even temporarily, to some safer place would be cowardly. They all had to stand and face the enemy. It never crossed their minds to take her somewhere safe, away from the bombers. It never crossed her mind either. When she felt well, she wasn’t afraid of the bombs or even invasion. She made jokes about it. Nothing can be worse than what she’d endured when she’d been ill.

She knew Leonard watched her like a hawk. She knew the symptoms as well as he did, so she knew what to hide. It wasn’t difficult. Leonard was preoccupied; they all were. Nessa was the other hawk, but Nessa was nine miles away at Charleston. She could hide it from Nessa.

And the rest of them? Vita, Ethel, the others seemed like a handful of letters that turned to ashes in her hand. Somehow they were not tangible enough to pull her back from the river.

She thought about the river all the time. She thought about it while she nibbled bites of food so as not to prick up Leonard’s suspicions. She thought about it as she lay sleepless, listening for the bombers’ drone. The river was like a predatory snake, winding along the bottom of the downs. Sometimes it filled her with fear and dread. Other times, it was like a beckoning voice. She woke to the sound of running water in her ears, she could feel the current pulling her like an embrace. She wanted to be seduced, she wanted to stop fighting, to be overcome. To see the sky from under the water, to look up once and then let go.

She had the morphine, but she didn’t want that death. She’d always written about water, the sea, the rivers that ran through her stories like lifeblood. She thought of the little stream that trickled through the garden at Talland House. She wanted to be part of that, to join with that, a little speck of weightless matter pulled along to the sea.

She knew Leonard would figure it out soon. She sat by the fire with him at night and pretended to read, turning the pages quietly as the letters danced...
before her eyes. Her journal sat untouched. When Leonard made her go see
the doctor, she knew she had to act immediately.

Why was she so sure this was the right time to go? She knew she could not
face those familiar old demons again. She thought about herself as a girl,
lying there bookless, staring at the wall, listening to the voices in her head.
The milk, the isolation. Being forced. She’d resolved long ago, after the last
time, she would not be forced again.

Would she have felt differently if the US had entered the war that winter and
come to the aid of its desperate cousin? Would she have felt less like a small
animal in the path of a giant machine? What’s the use of wondering? She
could not push back the demons of her madness anymore than she could hold
back the bombers beyond the Sussex coastline.

It was old age she feared more than the Nazis, maybe more than being ill. To
be dependent on others. She’d tried to project herself into the future, to see
herself growing old, and saw only an eccentric old woman whose past
relevance to the world was gone. The only old women she knew were
ridiculous anachronisms, powerless, trivial. The face in the mirror was that of
an old crone. She thought of the elderly women of her own childhood, the
grandes dames of her fiction—they were all figures of irony, disdain. She
could not imagine herself as anything other than pathetic, alone, forgotten,
scorned, useless.

She thought of Septimus, the poor shell-shocked soldier she’d created to save
Clarissa Dalloway from literary death. She saw Mrs. Dalloway standing at her
window, looking down onto the spiked railing below, imagining her own
bruised body impaled there, like his. She’d given Clarissa the strength to push
back the demons and go back to the party, but Virginia resolved she would not
go back. This party would go on without her now. She would follow her
wounded hero’s lead and silence the voices once and for all.

Was there anything left to say? She’d had so much to say not long ago. But
the books she’d written seemed trivial now. She was convinced her past
triumphs were simply a fluke and now she’d be seen for what she really was:
a vain woman with marginal talent. She’d wasted her life frittering away the
years on nothing.

Did she know it was the illness behind these thoughts? She knew the voices
in her head were not real. But the feelings were too real to resist, like a refrain
from an old song she’d thought she’d forgotten: Hopeless, useless, powerless.
Alone. Not safe. No one loves you. No one really understands you. They
pretend because they pity you. Their lives would be easier without you. It’s an
act of love, to release them from the burden. It’s really the only thing you can
do for them, after all, to show your love for them.

It was pointless talking about it to anyone. There were so few who understood
the illness. Only Leonard and Nessa. She knew Leonard would go on without
her to do better work unhindered by her. Leonard did useful things. The world
needed people like him. She only held him back.

Nessa, it was more difficult. When Julian was killed in Spain, when Nessa
was destroyed by unbearable grief, Virginia had made Nessa go on living, day
by day, breathing life back into her. She knew the right words to say to bring
her back, the same way Nessa’s voice had gently guided her back from her
own Hades. Yet she could not repair what was broken in her. Nessa had said
she would be content but could not be happy ever again. Virginia knew that
though Nessa went about her life, took up her paintbrushes again, in spite of
the sly observations she’d offer with a wry smile—Nessa was dead inside, and
she, Virginia, could not bring her back to life. Neither could Duncan or Clive
or any of them. Nessa’s heart died with Julian.

Sometimes at night her mind was crowded with the faces of the dead. Mother,
Father, Thoby . . . Lytton, Roger, Julian. She believed in no afterlife, so she
would not tempt herself with the prospect of seeing loved ones again. She
found herself remembering Carrington. She relived that last day when she and
Leonard had visited her at Ham Spray, the wounded look on Carrington’s
face. She knew this woman could not surmount the loss that faced her, the
years ahead without Lytton. As the day wore on she knew she would let
Carrington go if that was what she chose. You will come and see us next
week—or not—just as you like. Two words—”or not.” She was like a
wounded animal; the kindest thing was to let her go. It’s the kindest thing to
do, she thought.

The Ouse seems placid where it snakes through the countryside beyond
Monks House. It doesn’t look like a powerful river from her back garden. But
she knew under that brown-grey surface ran a powerful current and that now
the water would be ice cold. It would numb her hands and feet within
minutes. If some frantic instinct made her reach for the surface, the rock in
her coat pocket would pull her down. And within the space of one or two
breaths, it would be done. She stood in the garden and watched it, waiting.

So she walked quickly along with bank of the river to the spot she’d picked
out weeks ago, where it levelled out down to the water’s edge. After a quick
glance around for fishermen, she dropped her stick and strode strongly out
into the river. As she felt the strength of the current, she knew she’d done the
right thing. The stone in her pocket pulled her to her knees, bringing brown
water up to her mouth. She smiled a little as the current pulled her off her
knees and carried her downstream. She resisted the impulse to fight for the
surface, but she bobbed up once and saw the downs. She heard a crow
squawk as the water closed over her face one last time. From under the water,
she looked up at the sky and then she closed her eyes. She wasn’t afraid. She
let out her breath and waited.

Melanie White
Common Reader

Experience the VWM online:
http://home.southernct.edu/~neverowv1/VWM_Online.htm

Photograph by Melanie White of the downs looking toward the Ouse from
Monks House
WOOLF'S VERB IMPERSONATORS (AND OTHER DEVIANTS)

Although written as prose, Virginia Woolf's story “Monday or Tuesday” takes form and authority as fast-moving poetry, ordered paragraph by paragraph, that depends on Woolf’s chosen genre of the sentence to cue her writing’s powers of motion. Most conspicuously, the three-hundred-word story moves by, with, and through its remarkable verbs. In her willingness to break the sentence, via verbs both devious and deviant, Woolf also subverts the prose.

Even so, the story begins lackadaisically: “Lazy and indifferent, shaking space easily from his wings, knowing his way, the heron passes over the church beneath the sky” (6). Woolf’s organizing metaphor—that of a heron in flight—begins the story with the bird’s rise, continues to span his voyage, and allows the story to conclude with his return, evoking each event through glimpses of things seen and heard as though aerially, and changeably, from above.

Though suggestive of a heron’s point of view, the prose does not directly represent it, but only allows a reader to imagine what the bird’s point of view might be like. In this sense, Woolf allegorizes what is possible (and impossible) about inhabiting another’s perspective. Despite the details given, departure is emphasized over arrival, as if to remind us that we can never quite imagine well or fully enough. A sensory miscellany flies past the reader as if bound to escape the understanding. The flight is paradoxical, and it is deviant.

The fleeting quality embeds itself, nevertheless, in Woolf’s brilliantly concrete language. The story consists mainly of firmly incomplete, fragmentary sentences and phrases, many of them linked by question marks or dashes. The ability of language to conjure experience largely through sound and image is emphasized and paramount.

“Monday or Tuesday” moves so swiftly through its three paragraphs that no narrator can perch in it stably. Instead of offering us a single consciousness, Woolf presents us exclusively with sensory impressions—sights, sounds, and touchable random truths—lacking any conventionally reliable avian or human caretaker, and lacking any recognizably unifying personal pronouns. In effect, the author demands that her readers volunteer to synthesize the missing consciousness, and place it in her shifty panorama. But first she insists that we must bring ourselves to feel subjectively a perverse helplessness before the totalizing speed of modern perception.

“Monday or Tuesday” moves as quickly as it does partly by virtue of an unusually high concentration of verbs, which take flight on their own: On average, one verb occurs for every six words. Of course, Woolf’s prose defies laws of averages at every turn; but still, the count would seem to be revealing. To establish a basis for comparison, and to determine how rare or common was the Woolf verb ratio, I also calculated verb ratios for three other, innately more generic types of writing: the literary essays of Alfred Kazin; the short fiction of O. Henry; and front-page New York Times news stories. The ratio for these three consistently averaged one verb for every nine words. (One might have anticipated a much higher ratio in the New York Times news stories, for obvious reasons: news concerns action and relies on verbs to chronicle it.)

Yet not only does the high concentration of verbs lift Woolf’s prose into the air. Her choices of verbs also serve at times to start or sustain the action of her story with a staccato command. At other times, her verbs prolong or delay action, buoying the mind. To borrow from Woolf’s own words in her story, “Monday or Tuesday” both “moves and remains” (6) in a reader’s consciousness, defying expectation.

This is partly because her single anchoring verbal, reiterated almost as a rhyme in the agitated second paragraph, is “desiring,” which she installs in the phrase “for ever desiring” not once but three times in the paragraph’s four sentences. The gerund lingers, and it teases by imposing a temporal counter-rhythm to the flight of the heron. What is desired? “Truth,” Woolf informs us. But in the touch-and-go tumult of her sounds and sights, any single truth soon becomes uncommonly difficult to locate, deviant on its own terms. The words themselves may present an obstacle to that path toward truth. So one must wait, while in motion. Desire, although usually a restless abstraction, actually seems easier to find and keep.

A reader’s restlessness is induced naturally by Woolf’s many verb forms conveying strong physical motion: to shake, start, swarm, dart; to be flaunted, splashed, gathered, scattered, squandered, torn, swept up and down; to rise, fall, voyage, rush, and return. As well as summoning these passive or active verbs, Woolf invents and relies on verb impersonators in her prose to act syntactically or rhythmically as verbs: 1) Dashes introduce furious speed into her prose, even when they bracket such a phrase as “for ever desiring,” which in its overt meaning suggests little movement. 2) Words in musccularly truncated sentences or phrases sometimes act communally as verbs, even when they minimize or omit true verbs from their commonwealths. 3) Question marks seem to defy any possible answer for the question posed, and to forbid any decisive resolution, but they nonetheless hoist whole paragraphs, like long-shot-champion verb chords.

Woolf’s verb forms may seem to evoke Paul Valéry’s paradoxical counsel as quoted in Italo Calvino’s lecture-essay, “Lightness”: “One should be light like a bird, and not like a feather.” (16) In other words, let the writing hurtle, and don’t float adrift. Perhaps style for Woolf was itself a deviant form of flight, never fixed.

Works Cited

SPLIT THOUGHT: MASCULINE VS. FEMININE IN WOOLF’S ESSAYS

In A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas, Virginia Woolf uses a rhetorical principle of opposition to emphasize the dichotomy feminine vs. masculine. She reveals veiled anger when she proposes that women construct a society detached from men’s and when she hypothesizes about androgy.
Subversively, she seems to suggest that splitting the sexes may not always be the solution, even though men’s superior status in history and literature was predicated upon women’s inferiority to them. Woolf aimed to establish and recognize a fairer status for women, despite the traditional conflict with men’s status. She presents this aim through dissociation and antithesis.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca present the rhetorical principle of opposition as dissociation. They explain that dissociation divides what an audience has traditionally regarded as a single entity. In their revision of Perelman’s work, Frans van Eemeren, et al., consider that dissociation as a creative process, where “the crucial thing is that the newly introduced dissociation should be acceptable to the audience that the speaker wishes to reach” (118). Benoît Godin writes about the necessity to establish oppositions or polarities. He introduces two hypotheses: the first deals with uncertainty, which tends to polarize arguments based on future consequences; the second is related to phenomenology, where body and behaviour present dualistic properties that are easily reproduced in language and thought (348-49). He argues that in the face of uncertainty people anticipate, imagine, and produce interpretations. These interpretations are in the form of polarities, which suggest that people are unrealistic, try to preserve the past, or escape from the present by envisioning a better future (358-60). The dichotomy can be articulated either as body and perception polarities or as social science polarities (Godin 363). Examples are polarizing pairs, such as individual against society, primitive against modern, or dominant versus subordinate.

Woolf uses opposition as dissociation. For example, in Three Guineas, Woolf uses biography and history as her main sources to show why women cannot help to prevent war. Men have been the main obstacle to women’s labour and education. Woolf proposes an ideal society in which the daughters of educated men found “the Outsiders Society.” In that society, the woman is a world citizen, dissociated from nations, who must leave him free to deal with this instinct by himself, because liberty of opinion must be respected, especially when it is based upon an instinct which is as foreign to her as centuries of tradition and education can make it. This is a fundamental and instinctive distinction upon which indifference may be based. But the outsider will make it her duty not merely to base her indifference upon instinct, but upon reason. (311)

Rather than directly oppose, Woolf dissociates, advising “indifference.”

For Brenda Silver, wrath explains why Woolf proposes a transformation of culture and society. Silver considers that wrath, in contrast to sarcasm, ridicule, or the passive resistance traditionally attributed to women’s cultural and political criticism, offers Woolf the means to answer her addresser. This wrath corroborates the radical nature of what Woolf asked of women, that is, to transform culture and their lives. Traditionally, women’s role is subordinated to men’s. When Woolf writes that women must fight for their rights and try to transform society, Woolf uses dissociation as a technique of argumentation so effectively that Eileen Barrett reads Three Guineas’ message as the opposite of dissociation, that Woolf shows that “patriarchy impoverishes, sexualizes, derides, and denies women’s rights” (25).

In her essay “The Intellectual Status of Women”, Woolf responds to the novelist Arnold Bennett, who asserted that women are inferior to men. In contrast to Bennett, Woolf maintains, “women should have liberty of experience” and “should differ from men without fear and express their differences openly” (38). She warns her readers, “a man has still much greater facilities than a woman for making his views known and respected. Certainly I cannot doubt that if such opinions prevail in the future we shall remain in a condition of half-civilized barbarism” (39).

When Woolf wonders in A Room of One’s Own whether the mind contains two sexes that correspond to those of the body, she envisions the masculine and feminine coexisting harmoniously.

Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought. But it would be well to test what one meant by man-womanly, and conversely by woman-manly. (128)

Woolf seems to reject the opposition in favour of an androgynous ideal, a notion that she includes in other texts like “Indiscernibles,” where she comments upon authors who do not write like men or women, but instead “appeal to that large tract of the soul which is sexless” (90).

Nevertheless, linguistic structures belie the content that suggests that Woolf avoids opposition. The linguistic structures related to the principle of opposition reveal antithesis, usually expressed through the connectors “but,” “however,” or “nevertheless.” For example, Woolf uses these types of connectors when she describes Shakespeare’s imaginary and gifted sister who cannot develop her talents due to her female condition:

She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother’s perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. (Room 61)

Margaret Ezell asserts that Woolf creates this character to reflect the average woman of that period, supplying data about female writers in the Renaissance through her imagination. Judith Shakespeare possesses a gift for writing that cannot be satisfied since she neither received a formal education, nor had conditions that allowed her to devote herself to a literary career. Woolf envisages women writers of that time as “isolated, embittered or embattled creatures,” and if they wrote they had to fight their frustration at not being able to create without social constraints.

In Three Guineas Woolf also expresses antithesis, not only through connectors, but through sentence parallelism and contraposition of noun phrases such as “your class,” referring to the men’s class, and “our class,” regarding the women’s class. She uses the determiner “all” against the pronoun “none,” two opposites concerning the opulence of one gender and the scarcelessness of the other:

Your class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically all the capital, all the land, all the valuables, and all the patronage in England. Our class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically none of the capital, none of the land, none of the valuables, and none of the patronage in England. (175)

Both through the use of the antithesis and the opposition of ideas, Woolf displays the complex relationship between sexes.

Woolf does not deny that masculine supremacy has prevailed all the way through history, conditioning and restraining women’s rights in relation to education, economy, politics, and artistic production. It is a difficult task to dissociate the traditional role that women have occupied, even in Woolf’s time, from the patriarchal establishment and, even more, to propose a new system of ideas as the ultimate goal of the dissociation, a break from the already known and tacitly approved values to a new conception. But Woolf does propose this difficult task in A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas. Her technique of argumentation has, subsequently, allowed critics and literary historians to deepen Woolf’s claim that one gender has imposed its
supremacy upon the other and that, even today, gender oppression occurs in many parts of the world.

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CHALLENGING GENDER ROLES THROUGH NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES: VIRGINIA WOOLF’S TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

In To the Lighthouse, Woolf’s criticism of traditional female roles is highlighted through her deviation from traditional story-telling, which implies an organized plot structure and an omniscient narrator. The narrator, who does not take part in the story s/he tells, uses the characters’ perspective in the first and final parts of the novel, while the middle part lacks characters and their perspective. Apart from the shift in narration and focalization, ekphrasis is also used as a narrative technique to underline the changing gender roles from a traditional woman, Mrs. Ramsay, to a modern woman, Lily Briscoe. The aim of this paper is to analyze the deviation from traditional female roles in Woolf’s To the Lighthouse through narrative techniques such as the narrator, focalization and ekphrasis.

The novel’s opening sentence “‘Yes, of course, if it’s fine tomorrow’” (3) is uttered by Mrs. Ramsay, while the novel finishes with Lily Briscoe’s thought “‘Yes [. . .] I have had my vision’” (154). In both quotations, the female characters start their sentences with an affirmative. Mrs. Ramsay’s statement suggests a conditional situation about the future, whereas Lily’s sentence expresses a finalized event, implying closure. Mrs. Ramsay’s desire that her son James go to the lighthouse is accomplished by Mr. Ramsay only after her death. In contrast, Lily witnesses Mr. Ramsay reach the lighthouse with his children James and Cam at the end of the novel, and reflects this act in her painting, a contribution to the accomplishment via art. The contrast between what one character accomplishes and the other cannot gives clues about deviation from traditional female roles.

Variable internal focalization, where focalization changes from one character to another, foregrounds Mrs. Ramsay’s domesticity and her unifying role in part one, “The Window.” The heterodiegetic narrator makes use of Mrs. Ramsay’s focalization most of the time; hence the title of this part suggests that the reader will see the events and the characters from her “window.” She is the only character who insists on opening the windows to have contact with the outside world, while keeping the doors closed in order to unify the family and keep the family members’ and the guests’ privacy. Since she has the duty to cook, knit, and take care of the children and her husband, she sometimes admits that she is like “a sponge sopped full of human emotions” (24). She also admits that “[s]he could not follow the ugly academic jargon” (9) and that she is bored of men speaking about politics, because instead of reading books she has to think about the fading mattress, the flapping wallpaper (20) or the bill for the greenhouse.

Mrs. Ramsay’s focalization on her husband, children and guests underlines her domesticity and her role as a social organizer. Even though she gets angry at her husband for spoiling James’s expectation of going to the lighthouse, and criticizes him for not paying attention to everyday matters (51), she admires her husband’s intelligence. As a protective mother she does not want her children to grow older and lose their innocence; she covers the skull in the children’s room with her green shawl. Since she hates to see people descending among them, and acknowledges their tributes silently, and accepts their devotion and their prostration before her” (59). She hates to see people sitting separately, because she considers dinner as a “festival” (72); a social gathering. The fruit dish, which signifies her fertility, is watched by Mrs. Ramsay for she does not want anyone to destroy its beauty by taking a fruit (78). The way she arranges the fruits by paying attention to the combination of their colours and shapes, shows her domestic creativity, which will be challenged by Lily’s individualistic creativity.

When focalization passes from Mrs. Ramsay to the other characters, the focalized becomes Mrs. Ramsay in most instances. The realistic, “egotistical” (18), and sterile philosopher, Mr. Ramsay, thinks that his wife is not very clever and well-educated: “He wondered if she understood what she was reading. Probably not, he thought. She was astonishingly beautiful” (88). Mr. Ramsay’s ideas about his wife suggest the stereotypical male view of the woman as an object of beauty.

Lily Briscoe, who is defined by Mrs. Ramsay as “an independent little creature” (13), is an important focalizer to challenge woman’s role in a patriarchal society. Lily admires Mrs. Ramsay for her desire to unify the lives of people. Her description of Mrs. Ramsay as “the shape of a dome”
Lily perceives that Mrs. Ramsay wants women to get married. In contrast, Lily wants “her own exemption from the universal law [. . .] she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself” (36). Lily’s definition of marriage as “a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball” (52) indicates her criticism of such social institutions. This shows the difference between the two types of women: Mrs. Ramsay likes company and cannot think of a life without the protection of men, while Lily prefers loneliness.

Woolf also employs ekphrasis, “the verbal representation of visual representation,” (Heffernan 3) as a narrative technique. To express Mrs. Ramsay’s significance in her life, Lily focuses on Mrs. Ramsay in her painting. She tries to justify women’s creative power to Mr. Ramsay’s student Charles Tansley, who thinks “women can’t paint” (35). The first part of the novel recounts Lily’s creation process as an abstract painter: Lily, playing with the classical Madonna figure, depicts Mrs. Ramsay reading to James in the form of a “triangular purple shape” (38). Lily’s deviance from realistic painting suggests her break from social rules. Lily focalizes on her own painting, remembering, “It was a question”—“how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left. She might do it by bringing the line of the branch across so; or break thevacancy in the foreground by an object [. . .]. But the danger was that by doing that the unity of the whole might be broken” (39). Since Lily is depicting Mrs. Ramsay in her painting, she has to reflect the unifying role of Mrs. Ramsay in her picture, even though her painting, composed of two masses, is abstract.

Part Two titled “Time Passes” is different from the previous and the following sections in terms of its narrative techniques. This short section prepares the reader for the shift from Mrs. Ramsay as the center of the narrative in the first part to Lily in the final section, by using external focalization. The heterodiegetic narrator tells the reader the wretched state of the deserted summerhouse after the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, her daughter Prue and her son Andrew, without using any of the characters as focalizers: “Listening (had there been anyone to listen) from the upper rooms of the empty house only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning could have been heard tumbling and tossing” (100). The parenthetical information by the narrator underlines the fact that there was no one to listen, showing the lack of an internal focalizer. As Sue Roe claims of this part, “The entire basis of Mrs. Ramsay’s illusion of harmony, with its tacit assumption that the subject has control over what she or he reflects, is challenged” (71). Since the narrator focuses on the condition of the house in the absence of the characters, s/he gives necessary information about the characters in parenthesis. At the end of this part, Lily returns to the summer house and the focalization passes to her: “Here she was again, she thought, sitting bolt upright in bed. Awake” (106).

In the final part, titled “The Lighthouse”, the internal focalization is mainly restricted to Lily’s viewpoint. Lily takes Mrs. Ramsay’s place in front of the window and watches Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James reach the lighthouse. In the beginning, due to Mrs. Ramsay’s absence, Lily feels “cut off from other people” (109-110). The only way for her to cope with this feeling of detachment and to keep away from Mr. Ramsay, who wants sympathy from Lily, is to paint and to use the canvas “as a barrier” (112) against him. She considers her brush to be the only “dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, [and] chaos” (112). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar show that in patriarchal societies “the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procurator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis” (6). Woolf’s transmission of the authority to a female artist displays her deviance from the traditionally accepted roles of women.

Unlike Mrs. Ramsay, who arranges dinners to unify her family and guests, Lily’s act of creation is very individualistic; she paints to express herself and wants to be alone. For instance, she cannot paint when Mr. Ramsay is around: “She could not see the colour; she could not see the lines; even with his back turned to her, she could only think, But he’ll be down on me in a moment, demanding—something she felt she could not give him” (112). Lily knows that she can never be as self-sacrificing as Mrs. Ramsay, and that she cannot take care of Mr. Ramsay. Despite the differences between herself and Mrs. Ramsay, Lily feels Mrs. Ramsay’s presence sitting next to her and recalls the past while she paints: “as she dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past there. Now Mrs. Ramsay got up, she [Lily] remembered” (128). Lily’s focalization on her painting and on Mrs. Ramsay reveals Mrs. Ramsay’s significance as a life-giving force for Lily, while Lily also wants to tell Mrs. Ramsay how “Life has changed completely” (130) after her death. Minta and Paul’s unsuccessful marriage is an example to this change, as Mrs. Ramsay had desired this marriage. The idea of life in flux is juxtaposed to the permanence of art in this part: when Lily thinks of her painting and Mr. Carmichael’s poetry, she realizes that apart from words and paint nothing stays the same (133). For Ruby Cohn, if “life and art are viewed as polar opposites in To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe may be regarded as their respective exponents. The former opens the novel, and the latter closes it, as the stuff of life may be converted, through a particular medium, to a work of art” (128). After Lily sees that Mr. Ramsay and the children have reached the lighthouse, she solves her problem of how to balance the masses in her painting by drawing a line in the middle to suggest the lighthouse.

When Lily finishes her painting at the end of the novel she paradoxically immortilizes as well as silences Mrs. Ramsay by framing her in her canvas, even though her painting is abstract. Many critics who deal with the problem of ekphrasis underline the silencing effect of painting. As W. J. T. Mitchell observes, the main aim of ekphrasis is to challenge otherness: “The ‘otherness’ of visual representation from the standpoint of textuality may be anything from a professional competition [. . .] to a relation of political, disciplinary, or cultural domination in which the ‘self’ is understood to be an active, speaking, seeing subject, while the ‘other’ is projected as a passive, seen and (usually) silent object” (157). Lily Briscoe, the independent female artist, silences her “other,” Mrs. Ramsay, by depicting her in her painting.

In conclusion, Woolf uses the heterodiegetic narrator and internal focalization to discuss the roles of women in patriarchal societies from the perspectives of various characters. The change in focalization from Mrs. Ramsay in the first part to Lily in the final one emphasizes Woolf’s expression of deviance from traditional female roles. The middle section, which lacks a focalizer, prepares for the change from a traditional woman to an independent one. There, Woolf experiments with a new narrative form, where characters give way to the heterodiegetic narrator’s descriptions of the summer house. Through Lily’s painting, Woolf also uses ekphrasis to question the roles of women. Linden Peach suggests that Woolf seems “to privilege painting—specifically Lily’s attempt to express herself in terms of colour and form—over language” (123). Thus, narration, focalization and ekphrasis in To the Lighthouse foreground the contrast between Mrs.
Ramsay, the social organizer, and Lily Briscoe, the individual artist, and display how art overcomes life in the end.

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DEVIAN'T SNAPSHOTS: RE-VISITING JACOB’S ROOM

Maggie Humm, in Modernist Women and Visual Cultures, studies portraiture and use of chiaroscuro as visual techniques repeated in Woolf’s novels. In this article, I extend Humm’s focus on visual technique to explore the snapshot as a textual structure in Jacob’s Room that Woolf uses to convey deviant narrative through nonliterary form. Through snapshot frames, the narrative gaze, while neither transparent nor omniscient, controls perspective, focus, and repetition. Woolf, by using the snapshot pictorial form subverts the traditional bildungsroman. Woolf seemingly sets the scenery of a traditional hero’s tale, but uses the snapshot form in order to mark the deviance of that life.

When Woolf presents the relationship between Jacob and Florinda, for example, she contradicts a hero’s tale, but she does not directly show that deviance. Instead, Woolf’s narrator frames Jacob and Florinda before they leave the room, shutting the bedroom door. The narrator draws attention to his affair, then excludes readers by limiting the pictorial view, since Jacob and Florinda leave the room and shut the door on viewers: the “obscene thing” is hidden, the narrator states (92). The focus is exterior; the adjoining room where Jacob and Florinda have gone shifts to Mrs. Flanders’ letters in the exterior room. Each letter becomes another frame, similar to a snapshot. The intimacy of the bedroom becomes secondary to the language of the domestic, since the letters replace the sex.

Woolf’s insertion of the maternal through snapshot images of the letters deviates from both the expected bildungsroman and Woolf’s own autobiographical impetus for the novel. Woolf foregrounds the language of the domestic, here represented as the maternal. That new scene deviates from the language of the patriarch by foregrounding the language of the domestic—the maternal—as a censorship of the forbidden sexuality. Jacob’s patriarchal sexualized world and experiences are diminutive in comparison to the memory and intimacy inscribed in each maternal letter. These letters not only record events, but represent the domestic spheres from which they originate. Jealousy, anxiety, and loss dominate these letters.

Valerie Sanders points out Jacob’s immense privilege, but argues that Woolf reinscribes that privilege, equating masculine and feminine. By excising Jacob from the visual field, Woolf emphasizes his ordinarness in relationship to women, which becomes, in the patriarchal world, inadequacy. By re-visioning the patriarchal space through snapshots, Woolf stymies a linear narrative. Each scene encapsulates a memory and each memory in turn becomes reminiscent of the maternal. Cycles of memory are not contingent. Instead, each memory becomes its own frame and is connected to the narrative via its relation to the object that triggers its recollection. Pamela Caughe points to Jacob’s shoes as a mark of him (66), an object I would argue captured in a snapshot image. Because of this method of narration, Jacob never materializes.

The snapshots of the letters reinforce his maternal bond to Mrs. Flanders, and simultaneously the maternal becomes even more complicated because of Jacob’s blurred relationship to his mother and to Florinda. Vara Neverow discusses the role of Florinda as a prostitute (203), and Betty Flanders as an Artemis figure, battling to transcend the domestic (220). Neverow points out that Jacob becomes a surrogate lover for Mrs. Flanders, since his mother’s jealousy of Florinda is palpable. Jacob becomes a beacon in which his mother projects the significance of her sacrifice and suffering. Her longing and expectations suffocate her language. Although Mrs. Flanders is bothered by Jacob’s boyish exuberance early in the novel, she is attracted to his stature in later chapters. With her letters she attempts to return him to the family fold, yet her physical presence is denied until his death. Their early mother/son relationship is maintained by a magnetic tension, which attracts as well as repels.

Woolf manipulates the visual techniques of movement and the still image to represent these complicated emotions. A similar magnetic tension exists between Jacob and Florinda, the childlike seductress who lures Jacob from his duties. The narrator’s disgust mocks any intimacy between Florinda and Jacob. Florinda is framed as a pitiful figure with her powder pale complexion “with tragic eyes and the lips of a child,” without meaning beyond her immediate sexuality. Jacob despises her ignorance, yet he returns to her time and again, thus replicating the same magnetic tension that dominates his relationship with his mother. The illicit affair cannot be made public, and Jacob’s sexual experience is cropped from the frame. Woolf excises from the snapshot scene in order to duplicate the public avoidance of sexuality.

Woolf’s deviant structure arranges the snapshots of Jacob’s indiscretion to reflect parallel deviancies. Jacob’s intimate association with Florinda, for example, mirror Captain Barfoot’s and Mrs. Flanders’ relationship as depicted in Chapter Two. Both relationships are illicit, and both harbor women on the periphery of society. As a widow, Mrs. Flanders is dependent upon the community and her sons for support, and likewise Florinda, as a single woman, is dependent upon the sons and fathers of the community. Woolf’s use of a deviant narrative structure emphasizing moments of vision rather than linear time reveals the subtle difference between the two while indicating the precarious positions these women maintain.

Chapter Eight splits in its treatment of Jacob. The first half deals with issues of the domestic, and then the second begins after the loss of Florinda. As Jacob fades into the background, the narrator wanders the streets, gathering images: an old man, a silver medal, bird eggs, and a ship headed out to sea. Jean O. Love suggests that the external reader gains the narrator’s perspective (320), and her insight would extend to this vision of objects. Each of these snapshots of objects adds tiny increments, which create a rhythm of picture followed by picture, undermining a normative perception of time. Jacob’s loss of Florinda is further exemplified through Rose Shaw’s tale of Jimmy and Helen. Woolf does not allow direct sympathy with Jacob.
Instead, heterosexual expectation produces, in Jimmy and Helen, an idealized symmetry of male and female relations—idealized and then obliterated. The public acknowledges and expresses their sympathy for each, but Jacob cannot be afforded such a parlor story. His illicit love affair is outside the respectable and no one will utter his tale of love. He like the narrator is outside of language; snapshots of objects replace that language. The right of passage he experiences with Florinda will forever remain in a different symbolic.

By the time Jacob is reading a copy of the Globe, his sense of innocence is gone. Indifferent to daily living and instead attuned to the state of the empire, his living follows the mechanical chime of the clock. Jacob’s room is a space the narrator will never inhabit, yet the narrator is left with a duty to remember and preserve it. The narrative then is not a collection of Jacob’s thoughts; rather, it becomes a collection of domestic impressions. From its opening with Mrs. Flanders writing, to the end where she holds Jacob’s shoes, the text has been a reflection on and of Jacob through the snapshots of objects that a mother can view with equanimity. While he may be the patriarchal, learned figure, his life is transcribed through a deviant narrative structure into the vernacular of the domestic.

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Notes
1 See Judy Little for another analysis of Woolf’s subversion of the bildungsroman—in terms of parodic structure.
2 See Jane Archer’s argument about Jacob’s Room as a text that foregrounds the perspective of a woman writing and watching. Archer concludes that the novel is written “from the perspective of a woman with a grievance (41).”
3 Both Sanders (165) and Diana Swanson (50) emphasize the brother-sister relationship (Woolf and her brother Thoby) that Woolf has translated into a mother-son one.
4 See Jacob’s Room 77.

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FOUCAULT’S NORMALIZING JUDGMENT, DEVIANCE AND WOOLF’S MRS. DALLOWAY
In general, Michel Foucault’s theories about panopticism, normalizing judgment, discipline and deviancy identify and help interpret tactics of surveillance, the power of normalizing judgment, normalizing constructs of class, gender and colonial roles, and attempted deviation. Virginia Woolf’s novels may anticipate Foucault’s formulations about normalizing judgment and deviancy, particularly in Mrs. Dalloway. With the novel’s seminal ideas of proportion and conversion, Woolf not only demonstrates the ubiquity and power of society’s normalizing judgment in early twentieth-century England, but also the remarkable backlash with which any deviation from these norms is greeted.

The tactics of normalizing judgment that Foucault identifies have a three-step process. Step one involves the setting up of the norms, which a ruling class brings into being. The establishment of these norms spans the breadth of society, but remains most forceful in connection with societal institutions that Althusser has labeled “ideological state apparatuses” (ISAs), such as schools, churches, the workplace, communications media, the family, the legal and judicial systems, the military, and the police. Foucault writes of the different forces at work in normalizing judgment: “of time (lateness, absences, interruption of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behaviour (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body (“incorrect” attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency)” (178). These categories inform the normalizing judgments in Mrs. Dalloway.

Step two in Foucault’s paradigm involves surveillance, deviation, pathologizing, and labeling. In other words, once the norms are constructed, society as a whole begins to police all of its members to certify that they conform. When someone deviates from the norm, they immediately are classified as abnormal, substandard, pathological, criminal, or deviant. Step three provides the power of punishment, albeit often insidiously disguised as a more benevolent form of discipline. Foucault writes, “marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced—or at least supplemented—by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body” (184). The final stage of normalizing judgment is unmistakably about the authorization of power, even if it ostensibly offers to cure, rehabilitate, or reintegrate. As Woolf will demonstrate, this exercise of power frequently exacts a terrible cost.

Woolf addresses the primary themes of Mrs. Dalloway in the literal, chronological, and thematic center of the novel. Septimus Smith (the first name evoking difference even as the surname reflects an English norm) becomes one of Woolf’s many victims of normalizing judgment in the narrative, not surprisingly during his clash with a center of power that Woolf knew well—doctors. Sir William Bradshaw, the ruling class ambassador of the medical ISA, has the power to establish the norms, the first step of the normalizing process. Sir William’s constructs become what Woolf calls “divine proportion” (99); all three steps of the normalizing process are evident: “Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper” (99). Woolf’s language is rife with the authorization of power, as Bradshaw “secluded,” “forbade,” “penalised” his patients (and, of course, “prospered” with regard to his own well-being), all in the name of a beneficial “cure.” With unmistakable violence Bradshaw forces others to share his sense of “proportion,” which Woolf characterizes as...
“conversion”: “Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess even now engaged—in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus of London [. . .]. She feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose.” She “desires power,” and “had her dwelling in Sir William’s heart, though concealed, as she mostly is, under some plausible disguise; some venerable name; love, duty, self sacrifice” (100). Woolf reveals the networks of power about which Foucault would write half a century later, as multiple institutional sites of power coalesced. The normalizing power of British tradition, with its “King and Queen . . . at the Palace” and the “stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it” (5), transcends the mere conformity of such “true” subjects as the “perfectly upholstered” (6) Hugh Whitbread and the conservative Richard Dalloway. The same forces of conversion earlier had betrayed Septimus into joining the war “to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays” (86) and England as a nation into colonizing places such as India and Africa in its own Anglicized Christian image, offering “civilization,” but desiring power and prosperity. Woolf masterfully strews the passage with institutional language representing church, charity, workplace, and governmental ISAs, with “preaching,” and “brotherly love through factories and parliaments.” She also forecasts the “plausible disguise” necessary in the final stage of normalizing judgment (or conversion), as well as the ways in which those who deviate will be violently punished. Part of Septimus’ insanity, of course, is that he recognizes that this is the rule of “human nature” (92, 98) rather than the exception, as conversion’s authority to impose limitations, to say “must” to those who are in her power (147), results in what he sees as the only possible deviation—suicide—even though he does not want to die (149).

Every character in the novel becomes limited, in some way, from normalizing judgment, sometimes in profoundly life-altering ways. Millicent Bruton “could have worn the helmet and shot the arrow, could have led troops to attack, ruled with indomitable justice barbarian hordes” were she not “[d]ebarred by her sex” (180). The normalizing effect of gender also causes Clarissa’s judgments that Miss Kilman’s desire to convert Elizabeth endangers her well-being, while Sally, the seemingly most deviant of all the characters in Mrs. Dalloway ends up “marrying some rich man” (72) and having five boys in Manchester (182; emphasis added), apparently having succumbed to normalizing forces in her own life.

Woolf reserves her most damning treatment of the devastating effects of normalizing judgment on individual lives for her titular heroine. Like Septimus Smith, Clarissa’s role will be signified by her name, Mrs. Dalloway; she will play the role of Richard Dalloway’s wife, the norm to which she also “must” conform. That Clarissa recognizes the sacrifices she has to make in the name of conversion is clear from her emotional response to Peter’s labeling her “the perfect hostess” (7), an epithet that might seem less than caustic at first, but one which signals her awareness of her inability to deviate from the normalizing judgments in her society.

Woolf details the profound effect that Clarissa’s conversion, after she decides to marry Richard, has had on her identity and happiness:

through some contraction of this cold spirit, she had failed him [. . .] She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated: something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together [. . .] yet she could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl, of a woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape, some folly. (31-32)

Normalizing judgment has imposed the most constraining discipline on Clarissa’s life, almost as tragically but apparently not as fatally as in Septimus’ case. Although she feels a deviancy for which she cannot account, the feeling of a “virginity preserved through childbirth” (31), societal conversion has led her to a more accepted sense of proportion. In this framework, the feelings that Clarissa has are un-nameable; she repeatedly uses the vague “it” to try to articulate them. When it comes time to attempt to express the desire that she feels for women, especially for Sally Seton, whose kiss offers her “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” (35), she can only do it in the language of the male orgasm, with Woolf’s language of swollen expansion, ejaculation, and the “hard soften[ing]”—Clarissa’s feeling, at first “like a blush,” “quivered,” then, “swollen,” it “split its thin skin and gushed and poured [. . .] over the cracks and sores” (32). In a society in which the only acceptable norm is heterosexuality, homosexuality is unthinkable—the only possible articulation must be converted to the dominant coding. In a novel that, at one level, begs the question about why Clarissa did not marry Peter instead of Richard, Sally does not even register as a possibility.

Woolf astutely represents the consequences of proportion and conversion. In Mrs. Dalloway especially, her characters testify to the utter alienation that such conformity invariably produces, and the deadening limitations that threaten our possibilities for human agency.

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ESTRANAGEMENT AND NON-CONFORMISM: THE CASE OF LILY BRISCOE
Adherence to convention is generally a difficult thing for the modern artist. He is essentially a rebel, fed up with things as they are, and wants a change at all costs. Laurenson and Swingewood have observed that early writers were much more integrated into the social group than the estranged, free thinking writers of the twentieth century, whose work is frequently characterized by subjectivity and withdrawal (94). This cultural factor describes, in general terms, the modern artist’s lack of rapport with his society at large.

A desire to escape, to go away to some other place is characteristic, then, of the modern artist. There is always the feeling that life, as the artist sees it, must be found somewhere else. Or if it is not found, as Lawrence found it in his Ranim project, the artist can create it for himself. But
because Lily Briscoe in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* cannot stride off as does Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, she uses her easel and canvas to ward off any intruders. She sets her canvas firmly upon the easel as a barrier, which, while frail, she hopes will be sufficiently substantial to ward off Mr. Ramsay for one, and his exactingness.

Lily Briscoe as an artist finds it best to stay and work from a peripheral setting, the Hebrides, far removed from the city of London. Beyond the normal holdbacks to the artist in society, she faces the challenges of being a woman in a typically phallocratic milieu. She has already quit her home because she refuses to adhere to her father’s expectations. Even while living with the Ramsays, she remains independent. She is not involved in the running of the house and keeps her distance from everyone. For example, when she begins to paint, she pitches her easel at the edge of the lawn (17). She does not like the center of activity, where anyone can burst into her freedom or disturb her work. When others approach, she turns her canvas upon the grass so that she and her picture are both remote and estranged.

She fights to ward off societal demands. This is because as she begins to paint other things force themselves upon her, including “her own inadequacy, her insignificance, keeping house for her father off Brompton road” (19). Becoming an artist means that Lily excludes other demands. She never accompanies Mrs. Ramsay for shopping for example. She does not cook and has stopped keeping house for her father, the duties expected of her.

She rebels against the marriage institution. Marriage would entail deep emotional involvement and consequently interfere with her painting, so she refuses to get married. Her notion of marriage is so much out of phase with the prevailing situation that Mrs. Ramsay calls her a fool. But as far as she is concerned, her rejection of love and marriage is a triumph against Mrs. Ramsay and the whole marriage system of the day (176).

She rejects the female desire for beauty adhered to by the Ramsay girls. She does not want to be admired or told she is beautiful. Thinking of Mrs. Ramsay, she muses, “Beauty was not everything. Beauty had this penalty—it came too readily, came too completely. It stilled life” (177). Equally she does not give admiration, although she lives among men and women who need it. Mr. Ramsay, for example, openly asks to be admired and flattered, but Lily refuses to say anything to him that betrays admiration. She refuses to relieve Mr. Tansley in his desire to assert himself, in protest to the phallocratic code that demands that women should be at the service of all men irrespective of their moral merit. Charles Tansley has no moral merit, and in addition, sneers at women. So Lily Briscoe swears to do nothing for him despite the convention that a woman should “go to the help of the young man opposite so that he may expose and relieve the thigh bones, the ribs of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself” (91).

In addition, she moves to the point of lacking tender emotions. She has no tears for Prue, Andrew, and Mrs. Ramsay when she is informed of their deaths: “Mrs. Ramsay dead; Andrew killed; Prue dead too—repeat it as she might, it roused no feeling in her” (146). The stereotypical woman in Briscoe has been denied expression but she does not become a man either. She is something of her own; an artist, somewhere between or beyond the sexes.

Lily Briscoe pursues neither fame like Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley, nor riches, as do Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Bankes from time to time. She does not bother that the fishing industry, the main economic activity of the Hebrides, is doing badly. She cares little that the government is not doing anything in particular about the situation. When in a conversation they argue about politics, Briscoe says not a word on the subject. On one such occasion, just before dinner is over, the group begins to talk about the policies of the Labour Party. She does not give them a hearing, complaining of their sudden change from poetry to politics (112). All this is because she is unaware of current events, but because she has turned her interests away from them. In her mind, she is not part of the economic game. Everyone else wants to go to the lighthouse or has been there, but not Lily Briscoe.

After the war, Lily resumes her painting, for the war had put a halt to her work. We meet her again sitting alone as ever, feeling cut-off from the others, watching, questioning, wondering about all that has happened during the war. The house, the place, and the morning all seem strangers to her. She has no attachments there, no relations with anyone, and just like the war, anything might happen again. To her, everything looks aimless, chaotic and unreal (146). Faced with this sense of not belonging, she feels she must escape somewhere and be alone.

Lily Briscoe stands apart from the common chores of humanity and the normal, common things that men are mindful of, and which govern them. She refuses to be pressured to do anything against her will. She prefers to be called a fool rather than align and thereby compromise the artistic and antagonistic drive inside of her. As an artist, Lily Briscoe has perfect control over herself. She is never moved to do anything against her will. She defies established institutions such as love and marriage, family life, social etiquette and gender roles, and stands apart from the rest, a non-conformist.

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**ABJECION AS DEVIANCE IN MRS. DALLOWAY**

Septimus Warren Smith, decorated veteran of the Great War, is perhaps the most deviant character of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. While English society looked to its returning soldiers to take up the positions that they had occupied before the war, hoping that, as Judy Giles puts it, “a return to the normality of established gender roles would secure and reinforce wider social and economic reconstruction” (4), the shell-shocked Septimus does not conform to his “established gender role.” Instead of doing his part to aid in the post-war “reconstruction,” Septimus sees visions of the dead and hears birds singing in Greek (24), and, as Susan M. Squier suggests, “In his illness Septimus expresses the source of his pain through his symptoms—the sense that all divisions are breaking down” (112). Through his perceived inability to maintain personal boundaries
Septimus’s condition can be linked with that which Julia Kristeva describes as abjection: “the ambivalent, the border where exact limits between same and other, subject and object, and even beyond these, between inside and outside, and disappearing—hence an Object of fear and fascination” (185). Because of his madness, Septimus is unable properly to demarcate his identity, to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. He is therefore considered threatening to the already precarious social boundaries of post-war London—abject.

Kristeva claims, “At the limit, if someone personifies abjection without assurance of purification, it is a woman, ‘any woman,’ the ‘woman as a whole’” (85). I would argue that, by connecting the stereotypically masculine figure of the soldier with abjection and, hence, with femininity, Woolf not only exposes the deviance that is concealed behind such patriarchal figures of authority, she also criticises the attitudes of those who would see suffering such as Septimus’s as deviant.

Elaine Showalter’s exploration of male hysteria in _The Female Malady_ supports this notion that Septimus’s condition, and the negative reactions to it, result from the blurring of boundaries. She claims that shell shock, the masculine variation of hysteria or neurasthenia discovered amongst men serving in the Great War, was so alarming for members of the medical profession, as well as society in general, because it implied a crossing of the line between masculinity and femininity. She points out that from the late nineteenth century, “‘hysterical’ had become almost interchangeable with ‘feminine’” (129). Men, especially fighting men, should not have been susceptible to such extremes of emotion, and those who displayed shell shock were deemed traitors to their sex. Therefore, “Septimus’s problem,” according to Showalter, “is that he feels too much for a man. His grief and introspection are emotions that are consigned to the feminine” (193). Showalter’s description of Septimus’s inability to restrict his responses to suffering and death to a stereotypical male stoicism link his condition with abjection, as does her suggestion that neurasthenics like him were considered “borderers” (136), people who inhabited what nineteenth-century psychiatrists called “the ‘borderland,’ the shadowy territory between sanity and madness” (105).

Furthermore, Septimus’s vision of himself as a “drowned sailor” (68-9) links him with “the prototype [. . .] of the deranged woman in Victorian literature and art,” *Ophelia* (Showalter 90). Showalter suggests that the watery end of Shakespeare’s heroine is connected with femininity: “Even her death by drowning has associations with the feminine and the irrational, since water is the organic symbol of woman’s fluidity: blood, milk, tears” (11). Although Septimus identifies himself with the masculine profession of sailor, that he sees himself as having undergone a typically feminine demise undermines his masculinity and connects him with the “woman’s fluidity” which Kristeva identifies as abject. Septimus’s doctors seize on his nervous disorder with voracity as something that must be put right, no matter the cost to Septimus or his wife, hinting at the fear such a “shadowy” approach to personal demarcation was thought to represent to society.

Neither educated nor common, Septimus “was, on the whole, a border case, neither one thing nor the other, might end with a house at Purley and a motor car, or continue renting apartments in back streets all his life” (84). Mary Douglas’s work on religious pollution and taboos in so-called primitive societies suggests a reason for Septimus’s unsettling ambiguity: “[C]onsider beliefs about persons in a marginal state. These are people who are somehow left out in the patterning of society, who are placeless. They may be doing nothing morally wrong, but their status is indefinable” (95). From Douglas’s interpretation of one on the border, it is easy to see that, although he might not be physically or morally threatening, Septimus is nonetheless “left out” of the world to which he ostensibly belongs—he is abject.

Septimus is easily overwhelmed by the city that “has swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith” (84). His tendency to be engulfed by a more powerful body means that it is especially difficult for Septimus either to form functioning relationships with others or to recognize their demise. When the War throws him into the company and comradeship of his commanding officer, Evans, Septimus cannot draw a line between himself and the other man—“they had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other” (86). The intensity of their bond makes it impossible for him to accept the destruction of their relationship when Evans is killed. That intensity inspires his thoughts of drowning, for his feelings will not be moulded into the shape of the doctor’s two idols, the goddesses of Proportion and Conversion that determine, “this is madness, this sense” (99-100). Because Septimus is “neither one thing nor the other,” he has been abjected from the society that he sought to protect. The death of his body soon follows that of his soul when he finally commits suicide due to the bouts of insanity, which include visions of Evans by his side.

Douglas is again helpful in interpreting the various reactions to Septimus’s abject state. As Kristeva has shown, the abject is identified as such for his supposed ability to defile and pollute (2), and Douglas has suggested that, “A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed” (113). Septimus transgresses boundaries, such as the line separating sanity from madness, as well as that dividing men from each other. His deep love for Evans and the madness that progresses after the other man’s death means that, in the opinion of his doctors Holmes and Bradshaw, Septimus is, to use Douglas’s language, a “polluting person.” His eyes “had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too” (14). Even visual contact with Septimus inspires uneasiness, and his power to contaminate becomes something that must be contained.

Because of the perceived threat that Septimus represents to the established order, his doctors attempt to control him, for, as Douglas puts it, “our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications” (36). Bradshaw calls on the strict guidelines of his goddess, Proportion, and advises a sort of quarantine whereby Septimus and his polluting influence will be removed from society until he has rested and eaten enough to be seen as fit to re-enter it” (99). Holmes appeals to the masculinity that Septimus’s shell shock has apparently weakened: “He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, a foreigner, wasn’t she? Didn’t that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn’t one owe perhaps a duty to one’s wife?” (92). Both men attempt to realign his behaviour to fit into what they consider proper in terms of health, marriage, and nationality.

Septimus’s suicide is, according to his doctors, a confirmation of the deviance they sought to cure. Even Septimus himself considers the act “their idea of tragedy, not his” (149). For Clarissa Dalloway, however, Septimus’s abjection and resulting death are revelatory. She recognizes behind his bold gesture a sentiment that she has identified within herself:
“A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death” (184). The “thing” that Clarissa believes Septimus has preserved is an ability to remain self-contained, uncontaminated by the “corruption, lies, chatter” bred by social conventions that “obscure” one’s own sense of self—the “centre” that Clarissa is forever trying to reach. Thus, the result of the young man’s abduction and death is Clarissa’s own realization of what “mattered” to her. For Clarissa, Septimus’s deviance signifies a positive “defiance” of the role society has prescribed, of those who would enforce the wills of the goddesses Proportion and Conversion. Thus Woolf ends her novel by validating Septimus’s deviance, suggesting that such “marginal” figures demand neither cure nor pity, but “an embrace” of understanding.

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SEXUAL DEVIANCE IN _MRS. DALLOWAY_: THE CASE OF SEPTIMUS SMITH

Perhaps because nobody has sex on that day in June 1922, the day of Mrs. Dalloway’s party, Virginia Woolf’s novel _Mrs. Dalloway_ does not accommodate an explicit treatment of sex or sexuality. The narrative recounts no moments of penetration, no graphic descriptions of genitalia, no ejaculations, but it nevertheless evaluates characters in terms of sexuality and diagnostically situates characters along a continuum of sexual experiences and pleasures. By emphasizing the integral place that sex and sexuality occupy in the characterization and construction of modern self-identity, Woolf engages with the dominant discourse on sex of her time, the discourse of Freud and the sexologists, the discourse of the doctors and psychoanalysts, and the discourse of politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals: what Michel Foucault calls the _scientia sexualis_ (57-58).

_Mrs. Dalloway_’s diagnostic emphasis on sexuality constitutes a key facet of its modernism, and the novel compels its readers to engage with particular characters in terms of the sexual diagnoses its narrative offers by means of a _scientia sexualis_. Indeed, if readers hope to position _Mrs. Dalloway_ in relation to other texts of its period, they must examine how it discursively manages sex and sexuality. Specifically, readers can do this by reading the novel as ordered by a series of “implantations of perversions” (48), which regulate its narrative of the sexual aspects of its characters’ lives.

_Mrs. Dalloway_ represents sexuality in these terms—as visible through particular pathological centers. The representational aesthetic of the novel depends upon these pathological centers. Because it does so, the novel’s narrative appears to evolve as meditations on pathologies or perversions, through which sexualities might be articulated. _Mrs. Dalloway_ interrogates sexuality and sexual identity by drawing attention to the peripheral sexualities that underwrite the construction of any “normative” sexual model. By presenting sexual heterogeneities, the novel displays a world ordered according to the “perversions” or “deviant” sexualities by which “healthy” sexuality might be measured and evaluated.

By engaging an “implantation of perversions,” _Mrs. Dalloway_ can masquerade as a novel pure of the “obscene” or “perverse” elements that stigmatized Lawrence and Joyce’s texts along with the texts of many other modernists. At the same time, however, _Mrs. Dalloway_ does explore those illicit sexualities that it overtly puts off limits. For example, the narrative positions the suicidal, shell-shocked, Septimus Smith on the margins of London society. Septimus’s “shabby overcoat” (14) sets him apart from the bourgeois prosperity of Clarissa’s world of parties and servants. While Clarissa shops and muses about her past, her purchases, and her party, Septimus looks out on the world with “the look of apprehension that makes complete strangers apprehensive too” (14). This look in Septimus’s eyes, like his shabby overcoat, sets him apart from those around him. Septimus cannot conform to acceptable patterns of behavior within his community. The first description of Septimus ends with the brutal image of a world that “has raised its whip” (14), seemingly poised to flog Septimus.

Readers carry this snapshot of Septimus with them throughout the novel: a man marked as other, whom the world will ultimately subject to its judgment, punish and expel. As the narrative continues, Woolf links this division and condemnation to Septimus’s sexuality. The narrative suspects Septimus and construes him as a threat not because he has been made “mad” by some outside force—the world, England, World War I—but rather because of the internal pathology that his intimate relationship with Evans, his commanding officer, indicates. The narrative never states outright that Septimus’s relationship with Evans was sexual, but its repeated references to their relationship hint that such was the case. As Septimus descends deeper into madness, and as his wife and the doctors attempt to diagnose him, the narrative repeatedly returns to the Evans-Septimus relationship, which manifests itself as “the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death: that he did not feel” (91).

Septimus’s emotional numbness leads to his ultimate inability to speak his grief, and this silencing of his emotions and of his voice directly relates to his society’s prohibition against homosexuality. As the narrative diagnoses the homosexuality of the individual, Septimus, it becomes impossible to separate Septimus’s implied homosexuality from his identity as a whole. Rather than just being the “perpetrator” of sodomy, Septimus becomes in the narrative’s eyes a homosexual, and as
such he must be silenced, expelled, put off limits. In spite of the fact that the narrative often treats Septimus with great sympathy as a man whom the war has destroyed, it simultaneously uses the character of Septimus to signify a threat to the society for which he fought in World War I.

According to Foucault, “homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from a practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul” (43). The medical professionals and those who respect their diagnoses in the novel think of homosexuality and the homosexual in precisely these terms. Septimus’s homosexual identity, distinct from the physical sexual acts that Septimus might perform or might have performed, mark Septimus as homosexual.

Snippets of Septimus’s delusions expose his self-diagnosing discourses that reveal that his identity is illicit and illegitimate. Septimus convinces himself that he must be expelled in order to contain the threat that his neurotic inversion poses. On the surface, Septimus’s madness, which many have identified as shell shock, inspires his suicide, but on a deeper level Septimus believes that he must die in order to comply with his society’s prohibition against perverse homosexuality (91). Septimus chastises himself on two counts: first, he indict himself for not caring when Evans was killed, which would have been the “natural” response to the death of a loved one; second, and exceedingly important to the question of Septimus’s sexual identity, Septimus recounts his “crimes,” which have left him a “prostrate body which lay realising its degradation.” The crimes he lists are not the crimes against humanity that war makes necessary but rather the crimes of marrying Lucrezia when he did not love her, of lying to Lucrezia, and of seducing Lucrezia. The symptoms of these crimes reveal themselves on Septimus’s body: he is “so pocked and marked with vice that women shuddered when they saw him in the street” (91).

Deploying the image of Septimus’s vice-ridden body, the narrative subtly confirms the homosexuality of Septimus, to which it gestures elsewhere in the text. The text deploys Septimus’s sexuality, to borrow Foucault’s phrasing, as a “medical and medicalizable object,” and “one had to try and detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior” (44). Septimus’s “pocketed and marked” body illustrates his peripheral sexuality and his physical “symptoms.” This imagery thus reinforces the text’s ultimate verdict about Septimus’s case: from Septimus’s own perspective, he is guilty of “an appalling crime and been condemned to death by human nature” (96).¹

The novel’s characterisation of the mentally-ill Septimus and the novel’s incomplete description of his formative relationship with Evans function as the mechanisms through which his diagnosis as “homosexual” becomes possible. Septimus’s homosexual identity comes to light inasmuch as the discourse on sex, a specifically medical discourse that Sir William deploys, might root out, regulate, and codify that identity. This effect in the text illustrates the way in which, according to Foucault, medicine “created an entire organic, functional, or mental pathology arising out of ‘incomplete’ sexual practices; it carefully classified all forms of related pleasures, […] and it undertook to manage them” (41). The representation of Septimus’s sexuality—indeed, his identity as a whole—evolves out of this pathology of the incomplete. Septimus does not complete his thoughts, he does not complete heterosexual sex with Lucrezia, and his memories of his relationship with Evans fail to articulate the nature of their intimacy. If we choose to call Septimus homosexual, then we do so on the authority not of acts or desires recalled or witnessed but on the authority of pathologies that the novel validates as legitimate and makes available through the medical discourses it deploys. Readers participate in the diagnosis of Septimus that ultimately leads to his suicide.

Still, when the narrative “says no” to the Septimus/Evans relationship, and later to the Elizabeth/Miss Kilman and Clarissa/Sally relationships, it does not do so absolutely. Instead, Mrs. Dalloway’s content mimics the “perversity” that Jennifer Wicke observes in Woolf’s narrative form. According to Wicke, “The narrative complexity of this and other Woolf texts rests on the almost perverse mobility of narrativity.” Wicke notes the “mobile camera of vision,” “a large cast, many only fleetingly the locus of narrating consciousness,” and “filaments of narrative line swoop[ing] back in narrative time or penetrate the rhetorical figures of speech already set up” (123). Just as the narrative exceeds the boundaries of conventional novelistic form by jumping from perspective to perspective, the sexual content of the novel exceeds the boundaries of the discourse through which it is deployed, performing an implantation of perversions at the same time that it “represses” those perversions with Clarissa’s party at the end. Mrs. Dalloway suggests that with repression comes perversion—deviance—and that every time someone says no, he or she also says yes to particular kinds of pleasure. Mrs. Dalloway explores the potential of pleasure as a regulatory and policing force, imagining pleasure in terms of its relation to shifting power dynamics.

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Notes
¹ Woolf’s image of Septimus’s body as expressive of his sexual identity has literary precedent. We find one notable example in John Cleland’s Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure where Mother Coxtart advises Fanny that one might identify homosexuals by their pocked faces after Fanny witnesses the infamous sodomitical scene of the novel.

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BAD RELIGION: THE IRRATIONAL IN MRS. DALLOWAY

Conventional wisdom tells us that the character of Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway* is mad, and that he suffers from delusions that are due to traumatic experiences in WWI. Several indications, however, reveal that his deviations from the norms of his society are not simply madness. Rather, he embodies an irrationality that exceeds madness and includes a religious orientation to the world. In describing Septimus, Woolf makes multiple references to archaic religious figures, including Dionysus. In the context of the rationalist, materialist epistemology that became dominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which both shapes Woolf’s writing and is reflected in *Mrs. Dalloway*, religion is similar to madness in being deviant and threatening to the social order by virtue of the “unscientific,” “irrational” belief that underlies it. Dionysus in particular, in Nietzsche’s formulation of him, opposes the rationalist discourse of modernity. Reading Septimus only as a figure of irrationality, however, oversimplifies the character because in several instances Septimus displays a commitment to the scientific approach as well as the kind of impersonalism and mechanicalness that are characteristic of a rationalist materialism. Septimus’s madness can also be traced to his overly-successful internalization of the rationalist discourse of modernity. Thus, the conflict between rationalism and the irrational is played out in relation to Septimus in two ways: Septimus occupies the position of irrational in relation to a rationalist society, but he also displays the conflict between the rational and the irrational within himself.

In England the battle between science and religion raged fiercely in the 1860s and 1870s after the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1871) and T. H. Huxley’s *Man’s Place in Nature* (1863). The propagandists of science, including T. H. Huxley, John Tyndall and Herbert Spencer radically attacked humanistic learning, attacks that amounted to a “bid to replace the authority of the clerical and educational establishments—still closely connected—by that of physical science and its practitioners” (Burrow 39). Woolf’s father, Leslie Stephen, was part of this scientific atmosphere and published *The Science of Ethics* in 1882, the year of her birth. In the works of Stephen, Spencer, and W. K. Clifford, the practice and principles of science were elevated to the level of an ethic, “like a religious vocation” (53). In his essay “An Agnostic’s Apology,” Stephen “came close to making unfounded belief a kind of sin” (53). In contrast, Dionysus enters the modern consciousness as a figure of importance and relevance at around the same time with Friedrich Nietzsche’s 1876 publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche defined the Dionysian as a force in opposition to the rationalist “Alexandrian” culture in which he lived, criticizing the optimistic outlook of science and logic, which believed in “the intelligibility and solvability of all the riddles of the universe” (66). Woolf’s treatment of Septimus, with his irrational metaphysics and experiences in post-WWI London, reflects this contradictory atmosphere.

Septimus identifies himself as “the greatest of mankind, Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever unwasted, suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer” (Woolf 25; emphasis added). Similarly, Nietzsche describes Dionysus as the eternally suffering lord: “this chorus beholds its lord and master Dionysus [. . . ] it sees how he, the god, suffers and glorifies himself” (Nietzsche 27). Septimus later describes himself in a way that recalls Dionysus’ dismemberment and rebirth in Orphic myth: “I have been dead, and yet am now alive” (Woolf 69).

Several other similarities connect Nietzsche’s Dionysian principle and Woolf’s Septimus. Septimus merges with nature in his “mad” reveries. Nietzsche’s Dionysian principle is similarly associated with a disintegration of the individual and a merging with nature. The desire for reconciliation with an estranged, hostile, or subjugated nature is a common trope in nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetics, most famously of course in Romantic poetry. In his union with nature, not only is Septimus a Dionysian figure, he is also a response to this modern situation of alienation from nature, a modern situation to which Nietzsche is clearly responding as well.

Also connecting Septimus and Nietzsche’s Dionysian principle is Septimus’s claim of absolute knowledge, a knowledge that seems both desirable and burdensome to him:

He knew everything. He knew the meaning of the world. [. . .] [H]e, Septimus, was alone, called forth in advance of the mass of men to hear the truth, to learn the meaning, which now at last, after all the toils of civilization—Greeks, Romans, Shakespeare, Darwin, and now himself—was to be given whole to [. . .] ‘To the Prime Minister.’ (66-7)

This status as the elected, called forth in advance of mankind, implies isolation from all other humans. Nietzsche characterizes Dionysian knowledge as causing man to see “everywhere only the terror or the absurdity of existence” (23). This knowledge strips man of his ability to participate in the world since action requires the veil of illusion. The man who has seen into the truth of nature, as Septimus has, is led to suicide, according to Nietzsche (23). In the end, Septimus is forced into suicide, not finding any refuge from his terrible knowledge and the isolation from the human community it entails, beyond the momentary release of creating one last hat with his wife.

In contrast, while Septimus is aligned with Nietzsche’s figure of liberating irrationality, he also represents and promotes a rationalist discourse. Septimus insists on applying a scientific epistemology to phenomena that are essentially religious and mysterious, that is, phenomena that evade classification in a scientific, rational epistemology (see 22, 68, 144). Another, more striking sign of Septimus’s rationalism occurs when Septimus notices, after the death of Evans, his inability to feel. When Evans dies, Septimus, “far from showing any emotion, or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime” (86; emphasis added). Septimus also approaches his wife’s pain in an inappropriately rational way, likening her sobs to “a piston thumping” and responding “mechanically” (90).

Septimus’s success in internalizing and reproducing the impersonal objective ethic of modernity, taught to him by the war, is a Faustian bargain. As critics of modernity, including Nietzsche, have long demonstrated, this repression of emotion and excess has detrimental consequences for the human spirit, collectively and individually. If we read Septimus as an allegory of modern society, he reveals the kind of illness diagnosed by Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Horkheimer and Adorno located irrationality within the
origins of Enlightenment reason, and Septimus’s “madness” follows a similar line of development.

Foucault also associates madness with modernity, telling us that in the second half of the eighteenth century, the conception of madness became tied to the alienation of modernity, and came to be seen as a symptom of modernity. Whereas in the sixteenth century, madness had been understood in terms of sin and the Fall, now madness was:

situating in those distances man takes in regard to himself, to his world, to all that is offered by the immediacy of nature […] there formed, in an obscure originating relationship, the “alienation” of the physicians and the “alienation” of the philosophers. (220)

In addition to its recognizable irrationality, Septimus’s “madness” is in some ways a madness of reason, and of modernity’s order, brought on and characterized by his alienation from his emotions. In other ways, however, Septimus’s “madness” is a sign of the irrepressible “irrational” elements of human culture that do not fit in the discourse of reason, namely mysticism and archaic religions. Yuan-Jung Cheng sees Evans’s ghost as a “constant reminder of World War I in this novel” (67), but more than Evans, Septimus is the constant reminder of the war, since Evans’s ghost can be said to be a figment of Septimus’s mind. As a reminder of the disorder that the war, and modernity generally, creates and is, Septimus must be confined or killed, in order to neutralize the threat he poses to his civilization’s order, represented by the doctors Bradshaw and Holmes.

Jamie Carr identifies Septimus’s madness and Clarissa’s sexuality as forms of resistance to the “moralizing and normalizing discourses that govern society, that coerce and confine the soul” (19). In Carr’s Foucauldian reading of Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus is a parrhesiast who speaks the truth, actively resisting a medical/juridical discourse (22). As Sir Bradshaw puts it, Septimus’s confinement is a matter of law since he has threatened to kill himself (Woolf 97). But Carr reads Septimus’ suicide as a form of resistance in the face of domination. In Carr’s view, Mrs. Dalloway “mobilize[s] an ethical truth around the production of ‘madness’ through Septimus […] [who] exposes and critiques the power of discourses to regulate subjectivity” (Carr 22). Thus, Septimus is a figure of resistance in both active and non-active ways whose presence threatens the rational order of modern society.

Septimus is set against the normalizing social order, which is most clearly represented in the novel by Sir Bradshaw and Dr. Holmes. These doctors and the medical establishment in general are closely connected to the strength and health of the Empire. They are agents of the Empire and nation, and we see this most clearly in the presentation of Sir Bradshaw who makes England prosper by enforcing his sense of proportion on her lunatics. The discourse of the lunatics, who lack what Sir Bradshaw euphemistically refers to as a sense of proportion, threatens to undermine the strength of the British Empire, already in danger at the historical moment of the novel, and Bradshaw’s treatment through confinement is explicitly a service to the state, since the insane threaten to contaminate the “sane” who uphold and submit to the order of the Empire.

The threat the insane pose to the Empire is explicitly connected to religion in this part of the novel: “these prophetic Christs and

Christesses, who prophesied the end of the world, or the advent of God, should drink milk in bed, as Sir Bradshaw ordered” (99). Representation of religion as resistant to and threatening the social order of modern rationalist Imperialist Britain conflicts with representation of religion as carrying out an Imperialist mission, abroad and at home in Britain. Sir Bradshaw worships the goddess Proportion, who, along with her “less smiling, more formidable” sister Conversion, ensures the “proper” order of society. Critics have often assumed that Woolf is suggesting elements from matriarchal religions as alternatives to the ills of patriarchy, but, while she does do this in her novels, Woolf’s use of archaic religion complicates this section of Mrs. Dalloway, since the goddess Conversion is a tool of the patriarchal subordination of women. Conversion “feasts most subtly on the human will. For example, Lady Bradshaw. Fifteen years ago she had gone under” (100). These issues complicate Woolf’s representation of the relationship between religion and insanity and Empire in the rationalist, materialist social order of modernity. In Septimus, Woolf demonstrates the inevitable irrationality caused by allegiance to the modernist rationalist discourse as well as the irrepressibility of the irrationality it attempts to overcome.

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SYMBOLS OF THE NATION IN MRS. DALLOWAY
In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf portrays a multitude of visual symbols of the nation deployed to heal and unify the nation after World War I. Gillian Beer points out that Woolf conceived of WWI as “the deep historical separator, functioning as the line down the middle of the picture” (53). The forced and false gaiety resulting from the “stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it” (Woolf 6) is the result of the attempt by a collective national authority to overcome that historical divide and integrate the cultural England of 1923 with that of the past. When observing these representative images of the nation, however, individual consciousness and personal desire remain predominant in characters who occupy a hegemonic place.

Members of the ruling class in Mrs. Dalloway possess a strong awareness of the self and remain conscious of their response to the ideological content of nationalistic visual images. Richard Dalloway, an
MP and the epitome of the British ruling class (Barnett 25), professes a penchant for historical continuity, for past traditions and their continuation in the present: “he liked continuity; and the sense of handing on the traditions of the past” (104). In paying homage to the portrait of Lady Bruton’s father, Richard acknowledges authorized history, which, through the gaze of the portraits of cultural myths, legitimizes the present ruling class. Custom is not immanent for Richard, and his affection for it rests, to a great extent, on the social purpose it serves; custom creates a sense of England’s temporal and social unification. Richard’s survey of Buckingham Palace echoes this self-serving patriotism. He comprehends the palace’s symbolic potency and recognizes his immunity to its efficacy:

As for Buckingham Palace (like an old prima donna facing the audience all in white) you can’t deny it a certain dignity, he considered, nor despise what does, after all, stand to millions of people (a little crowd was waiting at the gate to see the King drive out) for a symbol, absurd though it is; a child with a box of bricks could have done better, he thought; looking at the memorial to Queen Victoria (whom he could remember in her horn spectacles driving through Kensington), its white mound, its billowing motherliness. (104)

He begrudges the palace’s stocky and staid symbolic value. While he excludes himself from the sentiment expressed by that group of devotees at the palace’s gates, he does so because he is able to recognize the aesthetic failure of the place. When he makes a parenthetical comment on the bodily imperfection of the monarch whose physicality he uses as a metonym for the state of the nation at a time of unprecedented national expansion and patriotic sentiment, his response reveals a split in his subjectivity, an ironic distance to the symbolic status of these signifiers. The ideology of these images at once attracts yet distances him. Irony, states Karen Levenback citing Kierkegaard, displays a “control of the self in relation to the world” (68). The aesthetic and physical degradation of both the palace and statue allows Richard to distance himself from what are to millions of others potent and collectivizing symbols of the nation. By remaining aware of his own response to national iconography, Richard limits its potential efficacy.

In contrast to the visual symbols, Big Ben, the aural symbol of the nation, carries a coherent, even coercive, patriotic message. In her discussion of the treatment of sound and vision in Woolf’s novels, Kate Flint states that while “vision [. . .] fixes objects out there, away from the perceiving self, the sounds one hears reverberate inside one” (184). Flint conceives of “hearing” as a “physiological phenomenon” (Barthes qtd. in Flint 191), a bodily process as opposed to a conscious function. As visible objects are located outside of the body, the perceiving subject is able to remain distinctly aware of their presence as something exterior to the self, allowing for an examination of their possible ideological content. Noise, however, is invasive, and a subject is affected even when unconscious of its presence. Woolf shows how aural symbols surreptitiously standardize the behavior of citizens to that which will serve the economic, political and social health of the nation. When exposed to the aural symbols of the nation, the individual’s awareness of the self is limited, and thus the individual’s place within the collective body of the nation takes priority.

The recurring aural image of Big Ben’s tone in Mrs. Dalloway unifies the hours in a day and makes the time of the nation contiguous. Big Ben’s chime has tolled every hour prior to, throughout, and after the war, effectively unifying pre- and post-war England with its authoritative note. As Bhabha tells us, a nation separated from a contiguous past is then separated from its powers of self-perpetuation (298). In contrast, the hourly toll of Big Ben has maintained England’s temporal continuity.

Louise Barnett identifies the image of the clock as related to those behavioural codes that mark a successful national subject from an unsuccessful one: “clocks represent society’s major premise that personal desire must be sacrificed to public duty, individual freedom curbed by an order imposed in the name of the aggregate” (22). Despite his ability to remain critical of national symbology, Richard Dalloway is unknowingly affected by the immediacy of Big Ben’s tones; the striking of the hour dissolves Richard’s ironic distance from national symbols and forces his thoughts to his public duty as an agent of the nation.

Returning from his luncheon at Lady Bruton’s, Richard is contemplative and happy, when his train of thought is interrupted:

here he was, in the prime of life, walking to his house in Westminster to tell Clarissa that he loved her. Happiness is this, he thought. It is this, he said, as he entered Dean’s Yard. Big Ben was beginning to strike, first the warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. Lunch parties waste the entire afternoon, he thought, approaching his door. (104)

The sound of Big Ben takes Richard’s thoughts away from the private sphere, away from those personal ruminations of love and filial affection and forces them onto the concerns of public position. Caught unaware, Richard cannot examine his response to the symbol as the sound cannot be separated or externalized from his subject position. His thoughts inevitably turn to his status as representative of nation, government, and empire, to his part within the collective.

The sound of Big Ben also appears in the scene involving Peter and Clarissa’s reunion. While Peter is relating to Clarissa his reason for returning to England, he breaks down, revealing the emotional strain of his present situation: “and then to his utter surprise, suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces, thrown through the air, he burst into tears; wet, wept without the least shame” (43). Clarissa’s responds by holding his hand and kissing him (43). This episode provokes Clarissa to contemplate what her life might have been like had she selected Peter instead of Richard: “If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!” (43). Clarissa questions the orthodox choice she made in Richard, and her emotional proximity to Peter in this scene stretches the limits of social propriety. The unreserved familiarity after Peter’s emotional outburst allows him to ask “[a]re you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard—?” (44). The question is interrupted by Elizabeth, but immediately after Clarissa’s “histrionic” announcement of the arrival of her daughter, “[t]he sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumbbells this way and that” (44). The physical contact that had been established, Peter’s hands on Clarissa’s shoulders, is broken at Elizabeth’s entrance, which re-establishes outward propriety. The accompanying violent, “indifferent, inconsiderate” image of Big Ben’s tones inserts itself between Peter and Clarissa with “extraordinary vigour.” The aural symbol splinters the emotional bond. Thus the fleeting threat to what Lisa Haefele describes as the code of “patriarchal marriage” (209) and domestic stability of the ruling class dissolves.
While Richard’s portrayal of the British monarchy highlights the susceptibility this representative ‘body’ of the nation has to physical deterioration, the monarchy as visible symbol, while much alluded to, is absent in the novel, almost as if refusing its authority to unify. During an early episode on Bond Street, the suggestion of nobility has an apparent “unifying effect” on the gathering crowd. Eveline Kilian proposes that the motor car “has an immediately unifying effect on all the bystanders, since it draws everybody’s attention to the expectation of seeing the Queen, the Prince or the Prime Minister seated within, and it fills everybody with a sudden and deep-seated veneration for all that England stands for” (153). This “expectation,” however, remains unfulfilled and the “deep-seated veneration” remains only latent. As a result of the car’s drawn blind, the national symbol remains hidden: “But nobody knew whose face had been seen. Was it the Prince of Wales’s, the Queen’s, the Prime Minister’s? Whose face was it? Nobody knew” (15). The motors of this effect on the crowd stem from a shared yearning which will only be fulfilled should that national figure reveal itself. The face in the car, then, is the absent signified: “there could be no doubt that greatness was seated within: greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond street, removed only by a hand’s-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first time and last, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England” (16). Beer states that the personage in the car is both “invisible” and “over-signifying” (161). This “over-signifying” results in an unstable signified, which produces uncertainty and fragmentation in the crowd.

While the absence of a coherent visual symbol leaves the expectations of the crowd fragmented, an aural pulsation emanating from that car unifies the individual gazers: “Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body” (15). The primitivist aspect of this description links the crowd through the body. The sound of the car’s engine pulses through the crowd’s amalgamated physicality, uniting the individuals. While individual conscious minds seek an absolute visible signified, but are ultimately frustrated by its absence, the car’s aurality produces the collective body of the nation. Septimus Smith recognizes this effect on the crowd:

the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything, to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. (15)

Septimus’s perception of the unification of the crowd leads to a vision of fiery destruction. Maria DiBattista reads this passage as describing Septimus’s fear of the power of the unifying symbol: “The revived memory of the past violence, the renewed readiness to attest their Sovereign to more violence, accounts for the horror that Septimus experiences as the motor car passes him. The necessary collective myth of national unity, once centered in an absolute icon of authority […] terrifies him” (42). Septimus’s fragmented state of mind and his altered processes of perception allow him to stand outside the denotive signifying process of the car’s motor and synaesthetically perceive the sound as that which the collective body of people cannot; he perceives violence occupying a central position within the collectivizing drive of national symbolology.

While visible symbols of the nation in Mrs. Dalloway contain an incoherent semiotic message, aural symbols enforce action that benefits the social and economic health and stability of the nation. The aural gives primacy to the collective and reduces the individual consciousness as mediator between the subject and the nation. Woolf’s aural symbols establish a contact zone between the body of the individual and the historical and cultural nation. Only Septimus Smith can escape the coercive and collectivizing power of the aural. He views the unification inherent in nationalistic symbols as ultimately destructive. Symbolic collectivity allowed for the unprecedented slaughter of WWI, and Septimus sees no reduction in the ability of these same symbols in post-war England to compel obedience from the populace. The symbols of national unity will potentially lead to even greater violence in the name of the nation.

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ORIENTALIZING ELIZABETH: EMPIRE AND DEVIANCY IN MRS. DALLOWAY
As John Jervis points out, the modernist movement comes at a time when Oriental pictures and motifs are extraordinarily prevalent and influential in artistic circles; they are part of a larger interrogation of what is seen as a paradox of exotic refinement and primal truths (75). This tendency carries over from the nineteenth century, and its images show up repeatedly not only in works of major modernist writers such as Conrad and D.H. Lawrence, but in the paintings of Matisse, the Fauvists, and others. Virginia Woolf also partakes of this trend, and in Mrs. Dalloway her engagement with Eastern “otherness” is particularly (continued on page 25)
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ORIENTALIZING ELIZABETH: EMPIRE AND DEVIANCY
IN MRS. DALLOWAY

(continued from page 20)

complex and intriguing. Oriental alterity in this novel is incorporated into representations of English selfhood through the figure of the protagonist’s own daughter, Elizabeth. Her hybridized appearance deviates from norms of Englishness and serves to disquiet her mother’s identity and its connection to Empire.

Was it that some Mongol had been wrecked on the coast of Norfolk [. . .] had mixed with the Dalloway ladies [. . . .] For the Dalloways, in general, were fair-haired; blue-eyed; Elizabeth, on the contrary, was dark; had Chinese eyes in a pale face; an Oriental mystery. (123)

In this passage, the wild blood of the Mongol hordes coupled with the placid serenity of a Chinese Buddha render Elizabeth distant and deviant, potent and perplexing. In Clarissa’s eyes, her daughter now looks like a foreigner; however, she is still her daughter. Elizabeth is thus only partially “othered”; she represents a deviation from the norm but is not so alien as to be unrecognizable as a part of Clarissa herself. This view of Elizabeth is analogous to England’s view of India and Empire in the novel. The country may be foreign, but it belongs to England. It has come to be seen as part English, part of the English family, as though it were England’s problem child. What began as domination has acquired an emotional weight, one that includes a sense of responsibility, and one that finally begins to partake of identity. Empire, though intended to remain as “othered,” has inadvertently become part of oneself. The imperial margins are already seen as affecting the English center; yet the specter of a resultant deviancy is tempered by a sense of elegy and the normalcy of daily life.

Clarissa shares a typical parent’s mixture of emotions toward her daughter’s increasing autonomy: excitement, pride, resentment, bafflement, and a sense of loss—nostalgia for the time when her parental power was absolute and when Elizabeth’s dependence upon her was clear. Her daughter’s arrival at the full flower of youth also reminds Clarissa of her own middle-age, of her state of decline, of her already deadened sense of life. Throughout the novel, the stasis and decay of British life develops with claustrophobic power and attaches itself to the weight of Empire. At the same time, Elizabeth moves steadily toward the autonomy of womanhood. In this way, the novel prefigures both the eventual decline and death of British imperial rule and the concomitant movement toward independence by the nations of the empire. And yet representations of Elizabeth show her as a half-caste progeny of Empire and England, a perplexing embodiment of prim correctness and mysterious sexuality, of deferential decorum and obstinate inscrutability. She has become the post-colonial prototype of the English psyche, the incipient new norm and the potential deviant.

This combination of English estrangement and utter familiarity with the Orient is wonderfully expressed by Woolf herself in a review of a book of Chinese stories: “So queer and topsy-turvy is the atmosphere . . . one feels . . . as if one had been trying to walk over the bridge in a willow pattern plate” (8). To the extent that Elizabeth is “orientalized” and estranged in her parents’ eyes, she is also recognized and even lamented as the legacy of their deadened love. Similarly, as the other characters’ lives in Mrs. Dalloway recede from the Orient, they grow nostalgic for the wounded youth these far off lands represent to them. For these

characters, identifying with a hybridized culture raises questions about where they belong. Hybridity, as Robert Young describes, can be “a doubleness that both brings together, fuses, but also maintains separation [. . .] the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form, of which it is partly made up” (22); and, as Young further elaborates, hybridization can also be seen as a kind of “raceless chaos” that “produces no stable new form” (25). In this way, the sense of a personal self these characters possess is bound up with an Englishness now strangely in flux.

Mrs. Dalloway is one of several novels in which Virginia Woolf indictst British culture for being what Kathy Phillips calls “a system of dominance that operates at home and abroad” (1), one that is “merely exporting a dead civilization” (8). In the minds of the characters who inhabit the world of Mrs. Dalloway, however, this “dead civilization” lives on, and British rule abroad exercises something more like parental prerogative than exploitative aggression. The discrepancy between authorial perspective and character point-of-view is important because it allows us to see that in Mrs. Dalloway the experience of Empire is coterminous with its influence. The impact of one culture on another is inevitably reciprocated, and the hybridity that results from colonization will in time visit the colonizer. Predictably, the novel’s characters are selfishly more concerned with the lasting effects of Empire on their own lives than on the lives of those their country has subjugated. And the world of the novel bears this out, as it is set in the drawing rooms and avenues of London and not in the contested Orient. Nonetheless, the Orient is present. As Phillips points out, “Woolf insists that the attitudes of Empire making also permeate life at home” (15).

Like Elizabeth Dalloway, who has begun to separate herself from her parents, the unruly child, India, has grown recalcitrant and begun to disobey. “One thing the ‘barbarian hordes’ in India were pursuing at the time was Gandhi’s satyagraha, literally ‘holding on to truth,’ i.e., passive resistance” (Phillips 10). Elizabeth now embodies that element of the orient that will remain in the British psyche as the offspring of the colonialists’ conception—the childlike passively-resistant East. “She [Elizabeth] inclined to be passive. It was expression she needed, but her eyes were fine, Chinese, oriental . . . very stately, very serene. What could she be thinking [?]” (135). “Elizabeth, with her oriental bearing, her inscrutable mystery, sat perfectly upright” (131).

The apparent interchangeability of Oriental imagery in the novel, whether Chinese or Indian or other deserves note, as it mirrors a broader trend in the European imagination in the early twentieth century. As Edward Said has remarked, “the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined” (63). The catalog of Eastern evocation is a fluid entity in the Western imagination of the period; borders and peoples dissolve into one another, religion and regimes commingling and coalescing, and so we find at times in this swirling soup of allusions Chinese faces, Indian attire, and Arabic dance, as though they were all from indistinguishable cultures.

Despite the vagaries of its Oriental imagery, Mrs. Dalloway concerns itself quite specifically with the Anglo-Indian experience and its legacy. Sharp notes that, “Indian nationalism emerged as the ‘legitimate heir’ to British imperialism only through a simultaneous writing of the educated native . . . into history” (D.II). In short, the Anglicized Indian becomes heir to a compromised Indian national identity. But if we ask who is heir to England’s national identity once India achieves independence, we find
a changed figure in Britain as well as in India. Rudyard Kipling once described India as “the monstrous hybridism of East and West” (qtd. in Jervis 195), and some of that anxiety of the monstrous, of the deviant, appears to remain in the work of modernist English novelists as they regard a newly defined England. As Homi Bhabha puts it, “the paranoid threat from the hybrid […] breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside” (116). But subverting superficial distinctions is of course one of Woolf’s strong suits. With To The Lighthouse, Orlando, and The Waves, perhaps no writer does more to break down our idea of the self and to liberate its possibilities; nevertheless, with possibilities come ambivalence and even fear. The anxieties of empire registered in Mrs. Dalloway have been the subject of much critical inquiry, but what seems to have been overlooked is the identification of a central icon of English cultural ambivalence toward Empire and its legacy, toward hybridity’s threat of deviancy and its promise of “monstrous” empowerment. If we ask ourselves now what that icon might be, the answer should be readily apparent. It is Elizabeth.

For there she is.

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IS IT IN HIS FEET? THE ROLE OF CRIPPLE AND DISMEMBERMENT IN JACOB’S ROOM

In Jacob’s Room, Woolf resorts to using the grotesque in order to subvert an oppressive socio-political system. She uses mutilation and deviancy as patently symbolic devices to portray that system’s hypocrisy and deformity. She especially stresses missing feet. Even though already symptomatic of an abnormal display of the body, chimering in with grotesque representation, in the Freudian context of fetishism, a foot represents an object of reverence, equivalent to the possession of a penis. In this sense, Freud notes, a latent desire for female castration underlies “the Chinese custom of mutilating the female foot and then revering it like a fetish after it has been mutilated” (Freud 157).

This violent spectacle constitutes patriarchal dominance through an accurate allegory when transposed into its Western counterparts. By inverting this pattern—in tune with carnival politics—Woolf flagrantly debunkss fatherly dictatorship. A symbolical connection between feet and the empowering possession of a phallus had also become central in Du Marier’s Trilby, a novel Mary Russo has signaled as a model of grotesque deconstruction of male-founded patterns (144). The alternative offered throughout Du Marier’s novel is not substantially different from Woolf’s use of the grotesque in Jacob’s Room. In Freud’s accounts women are de-footed as a means of symbolical castration or defeat; Woolf represents the opposite process in Jacob’s world, to show that the recurring foot deformity in males stands for sterility and waste.

Paradoxically associated with the desire for possessing a penis, missing feet in Jacob’s Room evoke penis construction. For example, Captain Barfoot, the mock figure of a military man—“[i]n spite of his lameness there was something military in his approach” (20)—is a patently grotesque character. Woolf stresses his virility, deliberately deceiving. Even though there is “something rigid about him”, the narration reveals that the rigidity was solely his lame leg, and such a rigidity parallels a rigidity of character, a sealing narrow-mindedness: “sticking his lame leg straight out, and placing the stick with the rubber ferrule beside it, he sat perfectly still. There was something rigid about him. Did he think? Probably the same thoughts again and again” (21).

Captain Barfoot envisions himself as a mythical leader idolized by women in want of his heroic rescue. These dreams actually reveal him as a pathetically grotesque version of the Achilles-like hero. Certainly, included through its presence at the end of the novel, the Wellington Monument had been erected by “the women of England to Arthur Duke of Wellington and his brave companions in arms,” an epitome of the masculine, inflated celebration of war-mongering leaders. Thus, despite his fantasizing about what women would feel, a dazzlingly different reality emerges in ironical contrast to Barfoot’s anti-heroic grotesqueness. Indeed, it is not the honors and admiration of women, but rather Mrs. Jarvis’s blunt recognition of his despicability that he actually receives:

Women would have felt, “Here is law. Here is order. Therefore we must cherish this man. He is on the Bridge at night,” [….] and there is the captain, buttoned in his pea-jacket, matched with the storm, vanquished by it but by none other. “Yet I have a soul,” Mrs. Jarvis would bethink her, as Captain Barfoot suddenly blew his nose in a great red bandanna handkerchief, “and it’s the man’s stupidity that’s the cause of this, and the storm’s my storm as well as his.” (21)

Captain Barfoot embodies a decrowned male hero. Displaying the lame condition of his foot, as well as his broadly frustrated would-be heroism, Barfoot represents, rather than the acclaimed figure, the fallen image. Thus debased in his grotesque truth, the Captain becomes a merely ridiculous prop, worthy only of the circus environment to which he is implicitly allocated when his wife Ellen Barfoot overlooks the circus posters, ironically regretting her being unable to attend the show. She “eyed them superciliously, for she knew that she would never see the Pierrots, or the brothers Zeno, or Daisy Budd and her troupe of performing seals” (19).

Another example of male barrenness—masked as a servile complacency with the hierarchical system—Mr. Dickens presents a masculine trace only when Mrs. Barfoot closes her eyes. In this case, although not missing, feet become a reliable metaphor for sterile virility, a trope which comes to portray the deceiving remnants of forlorn masculinity, subsequently revealed by a “tremulously” swinging and deformed black boot:
She closed her eyes. Mr. Dickens took a turn. The feelings of a man had not altogether deserted him, though as you saw him coming towards you, you noticed how one knobbed black boot swung tremulously in front of the other; how there was a shadow between his waistcoat and his trousers. (19)

Adopting a heroic pose—as in the case of Barfoot—Mr. Dickens has absurd pretensions at the level of his master, the Captain. Dreaming of being in charge for a great mission, his task amounts to taking care of Mrs. Barfoot, at whose commands he acts. “‘Move me,’ she would say to Mr. Dickens, after sitting on the esplanade for fifteen minutes. And again, ‘That’ll do, thank you, Mr. Dickens.’” Only through fantasy does Dickens manage to escape the reality of a home where his meaninglessness—like his deformed limb—bluntly sticks out, a “home where he was made little of, the thought of being in the employ of Captain Barfoot supported him” (19).

Jacob does not remain outside this system male deformity. Indeed, he turns into a hollow blank at the end of the novel, his only remnants the grotesque skull into which he has transformed and a pair of old shoes. Reminiscent of the missing feet—and concurrently, the missing penis—the shoes imply a profound carnivalesque-grotesque representation. Reunited in the same scene, these objects, symbols of lack, emphasize a debased male condition physically represents male waste in a society that despises homosexuality, masked by a faked pretence of virility. The men mark the inadequacy of the patriarchal standards that constitute the legacy of Victorian society, leaving only the question: “What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?” She held out a pair of Jacob’s old shoes” (155).

In tune with carnival politics, a final act of battering is implicitly inflicted upon the fallen Jacob—who, killed at war, has become the victim of his own patriarchal narrowness. Indeed, while no praise was yielded for the fallen Percival—the mock-hero in The Waves—a cryptic form of posthumous kicking of the patriarchal values Jacob represents occurs through the juxtaposition of the skull and the empty shoes. Significantly, if Wilfred Owen had extolled the qualities of these soldiers, lamenting the absurd loss of them indiscriminately killed “as cattle,” Woolf represents a patently irreverent counterpart. In Three Guineas, she posits “three reasons which lead your sex to fight; war is a profession; a source of happiness and excitement; and it is also an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would deteriorate” (114).

In sum, detecting the profound waste that emanates from a patriarchy-based society, only through the radical annihilation of its corrupted pillars does Woolf detect a glimmer of hope. Her carnivalesque debunking of the hypocritical foundations of this system, by presenting lame and absent feet, reveals, focused through the lenses of the grotesque, the withered and deformed reality.

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**THE FEMINIST FANTASTIC: UNCOVERING WHAT WAS HIDDEN WITHIN**

In the last few pages of her 1929 feminist classic, *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf takes a stylistic turn from the world of realistic practicality and personal experience into the unsettling realm of the fantastic. In order to conclude her exploration of a women’s literary canon with a call to become writers, she needs the aid of the fantastic to create a break in common reality and make visible that which “ought to have remained hidden but has come to light” (Freud 241). Woolf’s social reality offered two options for women. As Lucie Armitt notes, a woman of the nineteenth century was allowed “one of only two undesirable choices,” either to fulfill the role of “maternal angel” or to be treated like a child (137). In the twentieth-century, women continued to be subject to the same social confinements. To empower all women to determine their own value apart from motherhood or obedience to men, in her fantastic conclusion to *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf reveals an alternate reality.

According to Woolf, there is a “common life” shared by all women throughout time, which is not bound by death or the lives of individuals, but surpasses all rules of the recognized reality (113). Joining such a society empowers women as individuals, allowing them to redefine their reality. According to Freud’s essay on the uncanny, which Tzvetan Todorov deems a subset of fantastic fiction, the characteristic hesitation of the genre allows the protagonist to connect with a larger collective, which “fends off the manifest prohibitions of reality” (Freud 240). Allowing an isolated individual access to an established community gives power of inclusion to previously marginalized people and therefore can serve a political function of resistance.

The fantastic redefines communication and challenges “models of power” by inverting realistic power structures (Von Mucke 3). In the fantastic’s effect on the reader, the genre can hold a particularly feminist function, providing an escape inwards to connect to an alternate reality of relationships that have been hidden or forgotten. The feminine fantastic provides an escape from reality by leadings its characters, and subsequently the reader, inwards rather than out, positing the interior world of dreams and fantasy superior with access at the control of the individual woman.

To convey her suggestion that, if a woman has privacy, freedom, financial support, and the will, she can become the next Shakespeare, Woolf turns to fantastic methods, which she terms fictive. “My own suggestion is a little fantastic, I admit; I prefer, therefore, to put it in the form of fiction” (113). Her language cannot be contained and brushed aside as ordinary fiction, however, for it too closely demands its reader
to question her perspective of reality and self. Woolf speaks directly to the reader and of the reader, and, although she seems to be discussing a fictional character she calls Shakespeare’s dead sister, the focus of her study shifts to her reader as the main character. To make possible her theory that women are capable and have always been capable of artistic genius, she constructs an alternative reality, which challenges her reader’s perception of the world.

Fiction can present another perspective of reality; however, it does so in a manner that does not challenge the reader’s self-perception of perception of the world. Fiction can be playful, distant, comfortable, and safe. The fantastic, however, is that “hesitation as to how to make sense of seemingly supernatural occurrences that can’t easily be integrated in to a familiar model of reality” (Von Mucke 1). It insists upon a break in reality to make visible that which had previously remained covered up by society’s habitual perceptions of the world. The genre directly involves the reader’s sensibilities of self and relation to the world. To make possible a vision of women as literary geniuses, Woolf needs a way to address women personally for them to understand that this book is not one that can simply be returned to a shelf and perhaps be discussed in polite conversation over tea, but instead reveals an alternate reality that directly includes, addresses, and transforms its female reader.

Woolf describes another reality hidden beneath the veil of the “little separate lives which we live as individuals,” which takes precedence and exposes the world of women and men as a patriarchal convenience of construction (113). To claim that women are capable now as they always have been of artistic genius, Woolf posits that a common life exists which all women can channel to bring a common spirit of artistic genius into living flesh. Creating Shakespeare’s equally talented but silenced sister, Woolf suggests a ghostly presence of feminine creativity, a “poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the crossroads,” but “still lives” (113). Thus Woolf’s alternate reality is confined neither by the world of men and women, nor by death. And where does this ghostly spirit reside, but “in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed” (113). Woolf makes it possible for every woman to resurrect the spirit of Judith Shakespeare in their own bodies; for great poets do not die [...] [...] they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh” (113). If a woman longs to escape the confines of her world, she has always possessed it, she just routinely covered it up.

Woolf advocates an escape for women from the world of Victorian definitions of femininity and society, not an escape out, but in, “from the common sitting-room,” an escape “past Milton’s bogey,” to “fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women” (114). She argues that “then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born” (114). Taken at face value, what Woolf has termed fiction does seem to belong in the realm of fantasy; she speaks of ghostly possession and re-animation in another’s body. In the context of the experience, however, Woolf connects readers and this other world of possibility, via the text. This world, according to Woolf, has always existed, but the reader wasn’t prepared to see it.

To motivate women to develop their independent artistic genius, Woolf needs to convince her reader that the reality she is unveiling of a “common life” exists in the present and is accessible not simply in the vague future, but now. Todorov writes that the uncanny belongs to the past, explaining the previously inexplicable by known facts; he indicates that the marvelous belongs to the future as its explanation depends on conditions of an unknown and yet undiscovered reality. The fantastic, however, situates itself in immediate experience, “the hesitation which characterizes it cannot be situated, by and large, except in the present” (42). Such active and independent decision-making is precisely what Woolf desires of her reader, for her to dislodge herself from early twentieth-century social regulations for women and determine her own fate.

Instead of stumbling upon an alternate reality by chance, accessing the feminist fantastic depends upon one’s independent choice of participation. By engaging with the fantastic, a woman can create her own reality; by turning inward she can recognize what creative powers have always existed, but remained hidden by social constructions of realism. By reclaiming the collective power patriarchal society has taught women to forget or ignore, women can rejoin their fragmented selves and actively choose their identities beyond the choice of motherhood or childhood. Therefore, A Room of One’s Own remains an immediate call to action for readers even into the twenty-first century and a continual reference for evolving feminism.

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DEVIA TION AND ACCELERATION: TIME IN THE STORY AND NARRATIVE OF ORLANDO

If Mrs. Dalloway can tell the story of a woman’s coming-of-age through telling the story of one day in her later adult life, and To The Lighthouse can relate one day at the Ramsay’s summer house in one section while spending somewhat less space on the ten years that pass after that day in the next, what do we make of the larger-scale slippage of time in Orlando: A Biography, which chronicles a gender-morphing protagonist who ages only twenty years over the course of three and a half centuries? The deviation between the duration-of-story and length-of-narrative, what Gerard Genette, among other narratologists, terms duration, is a temporal-spatial comparison, since the time of the narrative cannot be gauged by how long it takes to write it or read it, but instead by its length in pages or lines. This comparison offers a sense of the rhythm or speed of the narrative. Yet if speed is a ratio of space and time, meters per second, for example, or pages per unit of time, the variable of age must also be accounted for when we focus on Orlando, since at the end of more than three hundred pages and more than three hundred years, Orlando is thirty-six, not three hundred and fifty. The distinction between chronological time and age in Orlando suggests the necessity of adding a second accounting of time to the ratio, making it instead pages per unit of chronologic time per unit of age. This notion, what I am calling narrative acceleration, allows consideration of the acceleration of time in both story—Orlando’s life—and narrative—Orlando: A Biography.

When the novel, or, rather, “biography,” begins, the reader has no sense of the slippage of time between chronology and age in Orlando’s story. As Orlando ages from sixteen to thirty, the chronologic time has moved from a point at which “sixteenth century had still some years of its course to run” (16) to the age of “Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Browne, Donne, all now writing or just having written” (88). Thus we are hardly aware of the incongruous time of Orlando’s story unless we stop to calculate, and even then the chronologic references are not specific enough to reveal any major time-offense, so we gloss over them. It is not until we realize how much chronologic time passes while Orlando remains thirty years old—she has lived for a span of time beyond one lifetime, “precisely the sixty-eight or seventy-two years allotted [. . . ] on the tombstone” (305), indeed beyond several lifetimes, and is barely yet middle-aged—that we see the deviance between chronology and age in the story. Movement through time, according to the biographer, rather than being quantifiable, is something more experiential: “An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second” (98). Time is something quite individual, different to Orlando the boy, the man, the woman, to the biographer, the reader, to the gypsies Orlando lives with after becoming a woman and who consider the depth of Orlando’s lineage “negligible” (148).

Time, an “individual phenomenon” is subjective not only in the story of Orlando’s life but also in the narrating of it. Narrative acceleration is a result not only of how long Orlando lives but also of what the narrator finds interesting enough to narrate, and in what space. Describing what she/he deems an uneventful stretch of time in an accelerated way, the biographer suggests that an even more abbreviated version would suffice, since: things remain much as they are for two or three hundred years or so, except for a little dust and a few cobwebs which one old woman can sweep up in half an hour; a conclusion which, one cannot help feeling, might have been reached more quickly by the simple statement that “Time passed” (here the exact amount could be indicated in brackets) and nothing whatever happened. (97-98)

In echoing the “Time Passes” section of To The Lighthouse, even including an allusion to Mrs. McNab, the cleaning woman, these few lines suggest, perhaps not to the biography’s implied reader but to Woolf’s informed reader, that important things, such as Mrs. Ramsay’s death, for example, happen in a stretch of time that is described by another as uneventful.

This compression and expansion of time, then, is not only a factor in the realm of Orlando’s life, but is a phenomenon the biographer must acknowledge in relating the story of Orlando:

This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation. But the biographer, whose interests are, as we have said, highly restricted, must confine himself to one simple statement: when a man has reached the age of thirty, as Orlando now had, time when he is thinking becomes inordinately long; time when he is going becomes inordinately short. (98)

Thus, although it is worth noting that Orlando’s life can move quickly or slowly relative to time, the biographer is too limited by space and time to take it up formally. Instead, as he has done with other central issues elsewhere in the narrative, she/he glosses over it, offering only a few lines of thought on the subject, so that whatever the deviance is between time on the clock and time in the mind, the space afforded to it is so small and disproportionate that it in essence accelerates the narrative.

Despite his statement to the contrary, the biographer does continue to delve into the concept of different kinds of time. He erroneously claims, however, that “It would be no exaggeration to say that he would go out after breakfast a man of thirty and come home to dinner a man of fifty-five at least. One week added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most” (99). Orlando never turns fifty-five in the scope elsewhere in the narrative, nor is Orlando still a man much past the age of thirty. By the biographer’s tampering with the acceleration of time, as Orlando’s age increases too rapidly per passage of chronologic time and narrative space, the deviance of time in the narrative exceeds even the deviance of time in Orlando’s story.

If readers enter the world of Orlando facilitated by the biographer, then we must also believe in the narrative as a biography. This biography, however, deviates from the biographic form by omitting from its beginning, or from any point in the male Orlando’s narrative, mention of Orlando’s birth. This ellipsis constitutes a fundamental gap in the narrative, and one of the most striking sensations of narrative acceleration: it is as though the narrative moved from zero to sixteen in no time—or space—that is, it moves forward infinitely faster than the story, which took an unknown number of chronologic years to age Orlando sixteen years. Although there is, much later in the narrative, mention of Orlando’s birth, “her dark hair and dark
complexion bore out the belief that she was, by birth, one of them [the gipsies] and had been snatched by an English Duke from a nut tree when she was a baby and taken to that barbarous land where people live in houses because they are too feeble and diseased to stand the open air” (141-42), it is only speculative and, even still, only the briefest summary of what deserves greater consideration.

Narrative time becomes even more deviant when it narrates the subject of a biography at “the present moment” (298), relating Orlando’s story as she is living it. Since the narrative does not chronicle every second of Orlando’s time on that day, the eleventh of October, 1928, since the narrative time—as gauged by the space allotted—is not equal to the story’s time, it would be impossible for Orlando and the narrator to each do their part—living for Orlando, writing for the biographer—simultaneously. The mention earlier in the novel of a sequel, “But he do their part—living for Orlando, writing for the biographer—story’s time, it would be impossible for Orlando and the narrator to each do their part—living for Orlando, writing for the biographer—simultaneously.” The mention earlier in the novel of a sequel, “But he was deeply smitten with it [literature], as the sequel shows” (75-76), further complicates the notion that Orlando and the biographer have reached a common time. Although the sequel here might instead refer to something Orlando is reading or writing, it comes across as the biographer’s sequel which considers Orlando’s love of literature. A sequel to Orlando: A Biography could not exist if the first text ends at the present day, unless the two were written out of sequence, thus making the second volume not a sequel.

Accepting the deviance of time that would allow Orlando to live at the present moment as the biographer narrates her story, the reader observes Orlando in the modern era. The narrative, which has sped through centuries, now slows down to detail one day in Orlando’s life, much as Mrs. Dalloway does. Both narratives follow their protagonist hour by hour through her day, beginning with morning shopping errands, while pausing the present-day narrative to capture her reminiscences about life-shaping people and events from her past. Although it might seem odd to conclude the narrative of a life such as Orlando’s with such a pace that is so much slower and detailed than elsewhere in the novel, particularly at a moment in time when, with the advent of the automobile, Orlando speeds through her surroundings, the present moment is one in which Orlando reflects on her life, on her fame from the publication of her prized collection of poems, “The Oak Tree,” on her experiences, and on her many, many selves. The biographer, in keeping up with Orlando in the present moment, must give over the narrative’s pacing to Orlando, and thus regulate his narrative acceleration—or, rather, decelerate—to so as not to deviate from Orlando’s schedule.

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Notes
1 Mieke Bal discusses in both her editions of Narratology the notion of calculating the speed at which events are presented, likening it to the way traffic speed is discussed. She cautions readers, however, not to get too caught up in the mechanics and calculations, and instead to keep in mind how attention is patterned.
2 Acceleration is a measure of distance per unit of time per unit of time—meters per second per second, for instance. I use it figuratively as a means of incorporating into one concept the variables of space (pages or lines), time (chronology), and time (age). This allows me to consider how the narrative moves through both types of time.
3 Many of my ideas about time in Orlando echo Jane Duran’s about time in To The Lighthouse.

Again, narrative speed is a measurement of narrative space. Since this is an ellipsis—no lines in the narrative are devoted to this period of time—the narrative is considered to move infinitely faster than the time of the story. See, for example, discussions of duration in Genette, Rimmon-Kenan, and Bal.
4 Narratologists consider the roughly equal passage of time in the story and space in a scene possible only in dialogue, which can mimic the passage of time.
5 Harvena Richter maps out an interesting motif of the canonical hours throughout that novel, a more orderly structure than I am suggesting for Orlando’s October 11, 1928 section.

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DEVIANCY AS A WAY OF LIFE: THE YEARS AS CRITIQUE
When Virginia Woolf referred to The Years as a failure (L6 138), she used the word not to address the ways in which her novel didn’t succeed, but to mark its deviation from the type of novel that preceded it. Terms like elegy and novel-essay, as she first conceived of The Years, are considered as labels for Woolf’s work, but finally the word “novel” is the only convenient, if inadequate, term. Therefore, The Years “is” a novel; one that experiences history through individuals, and one that dramatizes its deviation as a critical position. Two female characters occupying strikingly different relations to deviancy allow the text to enact deviation as a productive critique possible only from the position of the outsider. Eleanor Pargiter’s inability to deviate from the path laid out for a woman of her class and position sets into relief the productive possibilities of deviancy as critique that is figured by the character of Eleanor’s cousin Sara Pargiter.

For Woolf, a type of deviancy is necessary to develop the kind of critical attitude that will actually produce social change, such as preventing war. This deviancy is dependent on an attitude of indifference that for Woolf is cultivated through what she calls the outsider. In Three Guineas Woolf describes the “special knowledge” of that class to which Eleanor Pargiter belongs, the daughters of educated men “to maintain an attitude of complete indifference.” Yet, she understands that the “attitude expressed by the word “indifference” is so complex and of such importance that it needs even here further definition” (107). To indifference Woolf opposes
thought and questioning that for Woolf constitute part of opinion must be respected” (107). Further, this indifference requires an instinct that has, she argues throughout Three Guineas, been cultivated in men by their education and society and which inevitably leads to war. Thus, in answer to the essay’s overriding question of how to prevent war, this attitude of indifference is one response. This attitude of indifference is in part “not to incite their brothers to fight, not to dissuade them, but to maintain an attitude of complete indifference” since “liberty of opinion must be respected” (107). Further, this indifference requires thought and questioning that for Woolf constitute reason, since “the outsider will make it her duty not merely to base her indifference upon instinct, but upon reason.” For example, Woolf suggests that when told “I am fighting to protect our country,” the outsider will “ask herself What does “our country” mean to me, an outsider?” To decide this she will analyze the meaning of patriotism in her own case” (107).

There is a crucial distinction being made by Woolf between the type of indifference being practiced by the characters in the text, and the productive indifference being rehearsed by the text. For example, while the Pargiters are shown to be insensitive to Crosby, the servant who also represents sacrifice (as she has been sacrificed by the society through gender and poverty which required her servitude in the first place) Woolf is deeply critical of this kind of indifference—a lack of questioning not of one’s own being, but of the other, through an assignment of the spirit granted to an entity considered to be substantial, present at hand, existing without synthesis of body and soul. While Woolf inscribes Eleanor, alternately with amusement, irritation, or obliviousness towards Crosby she is careful to represent Crosby’s devotion to them as well as the loneliness and poverty that are the ultimate consequence of her life with them, a life sacrificed. The characters might be indifferent; the text is not. This double movement is not even an aporia, nor is it a conflict; it is a process of critique, as is the conflict enacted through Eleanor. Sara, however, exists without conflict on the outside. She is in fact the very embodiment of Woolf’s outsider and this is how she performs rather than constitutes critique (that is, she questions through her textual behavior, rather than problematically represents what she is critiquing, as happens through Eleanor). “Therefore if you insist on fighting to protect me, or ‘our’ country, let it be understood soberly, and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts or to protect myself” (TG 108). This description supplements a scene between Sara and Eleanor’s nephew North, who visits Sara, upon his enlistment in the military in “1917.” She is impressed neither with his uniform nor his association with the military.

“‘There was North—North,’” she raised her hand to her head as if in salute, ‘cutting a figure like this. . . . ‘What the devil’s that for?’” I asked. “I leave for the Front tonight,” he said, clicking his heels together. “I’m a lieutenant in—” whatever it was—Royal Regiment of Rat-catchers or something. . . . And he hung his cap on the bust of our grandfather. And I poured out tea. “How many lumps of sugar does a lieutenant in the Royal Rat-catcher’s require?” I asked. “One. Two. Three. Four. . . .” (208).

Sara does not connect feelings of pride with North’s enlistment; rather, she meets his news with scorn and derision, calling him a “damned fool” and saying that he “sat in his mud-coloured uniform with his stitch between his legs and his ears sticking out on either side of his pink, foolish face.” She is thus deviating from the expected British response of pride in one’s country and one’s soldiers. Further, as an outsider and a deviant, Sara feels no proprietary compulsion to keep these opinions to herself. She is not only self-conscious in the sense of being present to one self, but she is self-articulating and attesting. It is at Sara’s decisive words, an outsider’s words, towards North’s enlistment in the service that Eleanor feels compelled toward this “absurd but vehement” loyalty for a “native land” despite the fact that it is one for which she has “no affection.” Again Sara is shown as performative, she imitates herself and North in her rendering of the conversation. This performativity illuminates the conflict of Eleanor that is to be further put into crisis through her friendship with Nicholas Pomjalsky. In “1917” Eleanor and Nicholas meet for the first time and it is then that Eleanor finds herself, also for the first time, related to as a critical being. That is, it is the first time Eleanor is asked to think and thus the first time she understands herself to be capable of thought coupled with expression. Earlier, in “1911,” Eleanor’s sister in law Celia asks perfunctory questions about Eleanor’s travels but her interest in Eleanor’s responses are even less than perfunctory:

“Was it nice in Spain?” Celia was asking, “Did you see wonderful things?”

“Oh, yes!” Eleanor exclaimed, “I saw. . . ” She stopped. She had seen many wonderful things. But how could she describe it?

“You must tell me all about it afterwards,” said Celia getting up, “It’s time we got ready.” (145).

This passage indicates that Eleanor is so inexperienced at answering questions that she is unable to completely formulate a response; and, it illustrates the problem of familial discourse. “I’d like a straight family to see itself in terms of friends” (72) muses Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and indeed, friendships in The Years seem a better model for “family” than are the families themselves. Family members are, throughout The Years, depicted as unable to communicate with each other, or to discern another’s emotional states. Although Eleanor reflects that she is the only person to know how Edward reacted when Kitty became engaged, this scene is not included in Woolf’s published text. Thus the one scene depicting honest communication is the one to which, significantly, the reader is not witness. Rose Pargiter, after spending an afternoon with her cousins Maggie and Sara is unable to discern Maggie’s feelings toward her. “Did she mean me? thought Rose as she went down the stairs. Did she mean me when I liked her so much?” (128).

After having fallen asleep at Delia’s party, Eleanor tries to cover the fact by continuing a conversation that has long since ended: “‘only a second’s nap,’ she said” because she “wished to appear extremely practical, partly to prove she had not slept” (279). Compare this scene to an earlier one with Sara:

“And you, Sally?” said Eleanor, drawing back against the wall since they were going to dance. “Going to dance?” she asked, sitting down.

“I?” said Sara, yawning, “I want to sleep.” She sank down on a cushion beside Eleanor.

“But you don’t come to parties,” Eleanor laughed, looking down at her, “to sleep, do you?” (268).

The juxtaposition of Sara’s unselconscious submission to pleasure and Eleanor’s need to situate pleasure in relation to propriety and practicality speaks directly to the ways in which the two characters practice their
respective relationships to deviancy. Sara is all about self-attestation and she exhibits no embarrassment with respect to her desires but expresses them. Her behavior is unscripted (though of course it is literally, as a novel, scripted within the context of the fiction it is un-codified and un-codifiable). She is an event and as such she is also encrypted, retaining always the possibility of a secret. As an event she is also a rupture or trauma to the traditional. For unlike Sara, Eleanor represents the orthodoxy that is ruptured. She worries about the effects wine will have on her. She begins and remains self-conscious; that is, self-regulating. “Take care, Eleanor felt inclined to say,” to Sara in “1917,” “the wine goes to one’s head” (208). In “Present Day” Eleanor remains concerned about the effect of alcohol, this time self-reflexively. Though she notes “how nice this drink is” she also worries: “I hope its not intoxicating” (302). Despite the differences in time and space, and despite the crisis occasioned by her friendship with the character of Nicholas, Eleanor remains answerable to consequences owing in part to the “paralyzing effects” of existence and of a kind of indifference. She is still positioned, even in this last chapter, as a figure wandering both physically and intellectually, beginning thoughts she enjoins others to bring to completion. This impression culminates in the last moment of the text, when Eleanor encounters her brother. “Then she turned round into the room. ‘And now?’ she said, looking at Morris, who was drinking the last drops of a glass of wine. ‘And now?’ she asked, holding out her hands to him” (318). Eleanor’s relation to the other remains unchanged, and therefore so does the other’s relation to her. Just as earlier Morris had been irritated by Eleanor “always asking questions,” her niece Peggy has a similar reaction in “Present Day.” Yet these questions are not productive in the sense of decisive critique. Just as there are decisions that don’t decide anything, these are questions that don’t question. Eleanor’s niece Peggy, like Morris before her, draws attention to the type of inquiry with which the text positions Eleanor as preoccupied. Eleanor’s questions do not question in the sense that they are not decisive; that is, critical. In fact, typically, they aren’t even complete. Like her thoughts they seek completion by another rather than constituting responses to that other. In this way, Eleanor represents the norm from which Sara deviates.

From the moment Sara is introduced as a character, she is an event—a traumatic rupture to the novelistic surface, always already rebellious and linguistically challenging to the social structure into which she was born. “That’s dangerous” Abel Pargiter calls out to his nieces as they are tossing leaves onto a bonfire. And, almost immediately, the young Sara “seized another armful of leaves and flung them again” (86). By juxtaposing these two characters Woolf illustrated the ways in which deviancy, both in terms of narrative form and character development, can be used to critique that which it also represents: the novelistic tradition of which The Years is a part and the society the characters in it represent are critiques by the novel through figurations of deviance.

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“SLAVES OF THE IMAGINATION”: SIR WALTER SCOTT IN THE WORKS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF
On the surface, it is a strange pairing indeed: Virginia Woolf, a feminist and a modernist who is writing in a style that, through carefully crafted stream-of-consciousness, attempts to get at the texture of an ordinary mind on an ordinary day, and Sir Walter Scott, a materialist and an elitist whose novels demonstrate a greater concern with intellectualism and plot twists than with the internal lives of his characters. Woolf consciously writes against the tradition, the style, the gender, and the entire outlook that Scott represents. His is the outlook that she defines herself against in both her essays and her fiction, and, along with contemporaries such as Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy, Scott exemplifies in fiction what Woolf strove to move beyond.

In contrast, however, to the harsh treatment and constant derision that she heaped upon these “materialists” (286), Bennett, Galsworthy, and other “unscrupulous tyrants,” Woolf demonstrated affection and reverence toward Scott. She shows a surprising preoccupation with him. Scott appears in various places throughout her novels, diaries, and letters, and she wrote several essays specifically on Scott, including her essay on his novel The Antiquary.

Scott’s importance to Woolf was both autobiographical and critical. Louise DeSalvo suggests that Woolf uses Scott to come to terms with her family and her childhood. DeSalvo convincingly argues that, in wrongly describing the relationship between the Earl of Glenallan and Evelina Neville in The Antiquary as incestuous, Woolf unconsciously links herself to Evelina because of her incestuous relationship with her half-brother. In addition, DeSalvo associates Miss Neville’s suicide with Woolf’s later suicide, concluding that “the similarities between The Antiquary and Woolf’s life, and her later use of the novel, suggest that The Antiquary was immensely important to Woolf—that she used it to understand her father, to explain her own ambivalence about parental figures—but that somehow she projected her own experiences onto Evelina Neville” (226-27). Woolf refers to Scott more than twenty times in her diaries, and she directly references his work in The Voyage Out, Night and Day, and To the Lighthouse. Orlando, Three Guineas, and Between the Acts can be read as responses to nineteenth-century realism, and, more specifically, as responses (of varying degrees) to Scott’s work, particularly to his linear approach to history and narrative plot.

Initially, it appears that Woolf rejects Scott, particularly his plot structure, his sense of history, and the realism characteristic of nineteenth-century fiction. Judith Wilt writes: “It is exactly this notion of history as a great drama passed from fathers to sons [. . .] that Virginia Woolf wishes to reject” (476). Woolf rejects the chronological, alphabetical, egotistical notion of history as reserved for men only, a secret between fathers and sons [. . .] that Virginia Woolf wishes to reject” (476). Woolf rejects the chronological, alphabetical, egotistical notion of history as reserved for men only, a secret between fathers and sons, by manipulating both chronology and her characters’ gender in Orlando and Between the Acts. In To the Lighthouse she frustrates the linear plot, as she dwells on particular moments and subsequently skips a decade with the turn of a page. Woolf brings the reader into the Ramsays’ world through the thoughts and impressions of her characters rather than depending upon a third person narrator to package neatly the experience. But despite her divergence from Scott’s style of writing, Woolf, in an essay on the greatness of Dickens, remarks, “It can only be a question whether any other English novelist, save Scott, has a right to be called Shakespearean” (Essays 26).
Woolf’s allusions to Scott in *Night and Day* and in some of her non-fiction pieces further suggest that she is not merely interested in working against him; the relationship between Woolf and Scott is more complex than just a memory from her childhood or a collection of texts she associates with her parents. She uses Scott as a bridge between the male and the female, and, to an extent, the Victorians and the modernists.

That complexity shows itself in connections between Leslie Stephen, Scott, and *To the Lighthouse*’s Mr. Ramsay. Much like Mr. Ramsay, Leslie Stephen was a writer who thought and worked in a linear fashion, as evidenced by his position as editor of The Dictionary of National Biography, a project in which he literally worked through the alphabet as he edited the biographies of Britain’s most notable citizens, the majority of whom were men. Woolf connects the linear, masculine perspectives of her father, Mr. Ramsay, and Scott by using Scott’s *The Antiquary* in the “The Window” section of the novel, immediately after the climactic dinner scene. This vital chapter is the final one of the first section and marks the last time we see Mrs. Ramsay alive in the novel. Furthermore, it is the only moment of true connection that we observe between husband and wife. The chapter begins as Mrs. Ramsay watches her husband. She:

> looked at her husband (taking up her stocking and beginning to knit), and saw that he did not want to be interrupted—that was clear. He was reading something that moved him very much. He was half smiling and then she knew he was controlling his emotion. He was tossing the pages over. He was acting it—perhaps he was thinking himself the person in the book. She wondered what book it was. Oh, it was one of old Sir Walter’s she saw, adjusting the shade of her lamp so that the light fell on her knitting. (118-19)

Mrs. Ramsay observes her husband become one with the characters in the novel, displaying yet maintaining control over the emotion that his family so often finds lacking in him. As she does throughout this chapter, Woolf illustrates how interacting with art is a means of connecting Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Both at the level of content and form, art draws them together. Reading Shakespeare’s *Sonnet 98*, Mrs. Ramsay allows the beauty of the words to draw her toward her husband; reading *The Antiquary*, Mr. Ramsay allows himself to be overcome with emotion through empathizing with those who mourn, young Steenie’s death.

In *The Antiquary* Steenie’s death ultimately unites his parents. Steenie’s mother, Mucklebackit’s “masculine wife, virago as she was, and absolute mistress of the family, as she justly boasted herself, on all ordinary occasions, was by this great loss terrified into silence and submission, and compelled to hide from her husband’s observation the bursts of her female sorrow” (229). In Woolf’s novel, the emotional roles are reversed in terms of gender. In Scott’s novel, it is the peasant woman who runs the family who must hide her grief in order to maintain the virago image; in contrast, in Woolf’s novel it is Mr. Ramsay who feels the need to hide his emotion behind the pages of Scott’s novel. But ultimately, both Mrs. Mucklebackit and Mr. Ramsay resign themselves to their grief.

Woolf’s allusion to the funeral scene from *The Antiquary* occurs at a crucial point in the narrative, as it marks the moment in which Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are finally united after a day spent apart:

> Then, knowing that he was watching her, instead of saying anything she turned, holding her stocking, and looked at him. And as she looked at him she began to smile, for though she had not said a word, he knew, of course he knew that she loved him. He could not deny it. And smiling she looked out of the window. . . (thinking to herself, Nothing on earth can equal this happiness). (124)

This silent connection between husband and wife occurs only after their individual engagement with Shakespeare on one hand and Scott on the other; it is Steenie’s death (and not Mrs. Ramsay’s carefully arranged dinner) that brings Mr. Ramsay back to his wife and breathes new life into his relationship with his family.

Woolf mirrors the Ramsays’ union through the continual shifting of point-of-view throughout the scene, as she subtly moves from wife to husband and back again:

> Oh, it was one of old Sir Walter’s she saw, adjusting the shade of her lamp so that the light fell on her knitting. For Charles Tansley had been saying [. . .] that people don’t read Scott any more. Then her husband thought, “That’s what they’ll say of me;” so he went and got one of those books. And if he came to the conclusion “That’s true” what Charles Tansley said, he would accept it about Scott. (She could see that he was weighing, considering, putting this with that as he read.) But not about himself. (120)

Throughout the novel, Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley continually discuss their work, Mr. Ramsay his latest book and Tansley his dissertation, and in these discussions Ramsay constantly questions the permanence of his writing, comparing his own work to Scott’s. He constantly reevaluates his own work, questioning whether it will endure. Ultimately, Mr. Ramsay decides that Scott’s work will endure, and he finds comfort in this conclusion, thinking, “Well let them improve upon that, he thought as he finished the chapter. [. . .] They could not improve upon that, whatever they might say; and his own position became more secure” (120). Here Woolf connects the linear, masculine pursuits of Mr. Ramsay and Scott.

Through his reading of Scott, Mr. Ramsay pardons himself for being unable to reach Z in his pursuit of intellectual perfection, concluding, “Somebody would reach it—if not he, then another. This man’s strength and sanity, his feeling for straightforward simple things, these fishermen, the poor old crazed creature in Mucklebackit’s cottage made him feel so vigorous, so relieved of something that he felt roused and triumphant and could not choke back his tears” (120). Mr. Ramsay attempts to raise the book “to hide his face,” but he ultimately lets it fall and “forgot himself completely, [. . .] forgot his own bothers and failures completely in poor Steenie’s drowning and Mucklebackit’s sorrow (that was Scott at his best) and the astonishing delight and feeling of vigour that it gave him” (120). If only momentarily, Mr. Ramsay takes himself out of the alphabet in order to resign himself to the emotional dimension of life.

In this scene, Woolf breaks down the boundaries between her work and Scott’s, between the experience of her generation and the one that preceded it. Scott’s linear, masculine perspective must have intrigued Woolf because it so directly opposed her own. She undoubtedly had respect for it—partially because she loved her father and was influenced...
Woolf’s father was a fan of Scott and read all 32 volumes of the Waverley novels aloud to his children (starting again once he had finished the last); Woolf’s mother shared her husband’s passion for Scott (Kelley 37, 48) and Woolf writes that “for a birthday present she chose all of the works of Scott, which her father gave her in the first edition—some remain, others are lost. She had a passion for Scott” (Moments of Being 80).

Notes

1 Woolf’s father was a fan of Scott and read all 32 volumes of the Waverley novels aloud to his children (starting again once he had finished the last); Woolf’s mother shared her husband’s passion for Scott (Kelley 37, 48) and Woolf writes that “for a birthday present she chose all of the works of Scott, which her father gave her in the first edition—some remain, others are lost. She had a passion for Scott” (Moments of Being 80).

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WOOLF’S DEVIANT CANON

Woolf makes clear in her essays that she believes the only novels that can resist the assault of time are those in which the writer is able to create a plausible world, as close as possible to the one experienced everyday by readers. At the same time, this fictitious reality must never betray the author’s intentions, it has to be a universe where the reader can feel from the beginning the absolute, demiurgic power of the author and his ability to fascinate: “We feel that we are being compelled to accept an order and to arrange the elements of the novel […] in certain relations at the novelist’s bidding” (“Phases” 100). Woolf conceives of a new canon based upon a dialectic tension between the writer, art and readers. Masterpieces do not petrify into the monolithic testimony of the past venerated by tradition. Rather, they intervene to enrich the contemporary world.

In “Lives of the Obscure” (1925), Woolf emphasizes that this innovative canon should assess the importance of the minor popular books, of the mediocre epistolary novels, of the boring and incomplete dramas. Not only are these second-class works necessary for the existence of worldwide masterpieces, but they are also vital for the survival of literature itself because “a literature composed entirely of good books would soon be unread, extinct; the isolation is too great” (140).

The canon supposedly safeguards a vital spirit of literature, but risks crystallization and reduction to a rigid normalcy, incapable of welcoming new work. According to Woolf, the only way to overcome this impasse is to create a deviant canon by considering contemporary productions as a necessary, almost Darwinian evolution of the literary tradition. The tradition itself would therefore be conceived as a stimulus, an essential element to foster the expressive potentialities of the new authors. She directs critics to “scan the horizon; see the past in relation to the future; and so prepare the way for new masterpieces to come” (“How” 161).

Woolf seems to echo T. S. Eliot’s similar position towards the canon and the past in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1920):

The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. […] He [the poet] must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past. I say judged, not amputated by them […] It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other. (50)

This point of view, which distinguishes the critics who were also writers, allows Woolf to stress the difficulties of the choices made by contemporary authors. Their desire to represent the multiple sensations which cross the human mind in a literary work implies the need to manipulate language, to forge new words, capable of mirroring the complexity of the real world without being cryptic or artificial:

[Several young writers] attempt to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the
conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist. (“Modern” 107)

Even though Woolf is conscious of her own experimental novels, she neither defends all modernist works nor does she condone premature creation of a contemporary canon. Her honest analysis of the present allows her to reveal its uncertainties, its mistakes, and the unaccomplished attempts of its writers. In “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1924), she even considers the reasons of those who criticized the stylistically subversive and obscure structure of Joyce’s and Eliot’s works. She then demonstrates how the difficulty of these productions was an inevitable consequence of the attempt to reestablish a genuine relationship between the writer and his readership.

Aware of the need to create a more direct and immediate relationship between authors and audiences, Woolf stressed the risks of an increasing difference between the critical choice and the readers’ taste. Woolf recognized that readers, unlikely to respect any kind of imposed norm, often follow a desire to find themselves in the narration in order to believe it. The mind, she writes, creates itself a dwelling-place in accordance with its own appetites. Of these appetites, perhaps, the simplest is the desire to believe wholly and entirely in something which is fictitious [. . . .] We have secret sympathies for those who seem to resemble us. It is difficult to admit that the book may have merit if it outrages our sympathies, or describes a life which seems unreal to us. (“Phases” 57)

Highly subjective, the opinion of the audience had the power to modify the official canon deviating from paths established by distinguished critics.

This power of the audience may have led Woolf to consider several literary styles as the writers’ answers to their readers’ changing needs. In “Phases of Fiction” (1929), she revisits the history of the novel by considering the key role of the pleasure experienced by the public. From this perspective she links the evolution of the psychological analysis in James’s and Proust’s works with the readers’ desire to discover the interior truth of each character, to unveil the unsolved conflicts of a human soul with clinical objectivity.

In 1923, Woolf had already stressed how critics had a totally different attitude when they had to judge the present instead of the familiar traditional past, the well-consolidated literary tradition: “critics are in agreement about Milton and about Keats. They display an exquisite sensibility and have undoubtedly a genuine enthusiasm. It is only when they discuss the work of contemporary writers that they inevitably come to blows” (“How” 153). This contrast puts into question established literary standards. The different prosody of the contemporary authors, their innovative productions, which were often difficult to label, were a territory for “crimes of criticism” (“How” 154). Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway (1925), Joyce’s Ulysses (1922) and Eliot’s Waste Land (1922) are some of the main examples.

Woolf puts her ideas about the canon from her essays into Orlando’s last chapter, when Orlando crosses London’s center and experiences the vibrant, hectic urban reality of this major British city. Her gaze suddenly lights on a familiar figure, the poet Nicholas Greene. During the Elizabethan Age, Greene began to receive a pension of three hundred pounds a year from Orlando. He had then mocked his young patron and Orlando’s first poetic experiments satirically. Now, in 1928, Orlando finds Greene in the role of one of the most famous Victorian critics: “he was a knight; he was a Litt. D.; he was a Professor. He was the author of a score of volumes” (193).

Woolf connects Greene’s reappearance and metamorphosis to the necessity of revising Greene’s critical assessments, of reappraising not only his personal canon, but that of an entire nation, in order to include “The Oak Tree,” Orlando’s poem, as a worthy piece of British literature. Sir Greene even compares Orlando’s poem to Thomson’s seasons and Addison’s Cato. He finds it luckily distant from what he defines as the “modern spirit.”

Greene, Vita Sackville-West maintained, was inspired by Edmund Gosse, writer, poet, author of essays. Gosse wrote Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe (1879) and was a Sunday Times columnist. The episode with Greene in Orlando works as an admonition for a contemporary intelligentsia that was suspicious and biased against the modernist literary experiments. Instead of paying in aeternum the penalty for an excessively rigid review of what the future generations would have read as an erroneous and harsh criticism of a masterpiece, Nicholas Greene is the only critic who can survive to change his first judgment and finally correct it after almost three hundred years.

For Woolf, a deviant canon would become an ideal testimony of how high-brow and low-brow literature evolve through time. It would be flexible enough to represent both the tradition established in the past and some chosen examples of the most innovative contemporary fiction. It would mirror the mutability of styles and topics, the relationship between authors and audiences, and the vitality which pre-established convention could suffocate. The monumental group of works of art acknowledged by the critical establishment would thus leave the ground to a more faithful, vibrant account of literary creativity.

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Notes
1 In a letter sent to Harold Nicolson on 11th October 1928, Vita Sackville-West wrote: “Nicholas Greene you will recognize as [Edmund] Gosse” (qtd. in Glendinning 202).

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Review:

Woolf in the Real World: Selected Papers from the Thirteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf

“Wherever I sit, I die in exile,” a quote from “Jacob’s Room,” applies all too well to attending conferences as multifaceted as the 13th International Conference on Virginia Woolf. I am especially grateful to Karen Kukil and to the Clemson Press for the handsomely produced “Selected Papers” for the Smith Conference in 2003 where concurrent panels, hugs from friends too rarely seen, flashbacks from my early teaching days at Smith, all conspired to distract me from the “real world” of the conference. Oh, I do remember the glistering Chinese lanterns at the Lyman Conservatory evening party, the unique and precious exhibits, and a kind of collage of conversation with old friends and new, but as for specific papers, it is mostly a brilliant blur: Eileen Barrett’s updating paper on Three Guineas in Suzanne Bellamy’s panel, the various takes on the film of The Hours, a rather unpleasant session with Paul Levy, etc. To see it whole, well none of us has the requisite 52 pairs of eyes, and therefore we are grateful to Karen Kukil and to Wayne Chapman for providing this rich trove of material salvaged from the conference proceedings. I understand that it is also available on-line (at the Center for Virginia Woolf Studies, www.csbus.edu/Woolf-Center), but the hard copy is well worth the purchase price.

The conference theme, “Virginia Woolf and the Real World,” allowed for a wide latitude of topics and approaches. The editor has divided them, like Gaul, into three parts: the life, the writing, and, somewhat creepily, the afterlife, which includes as a kind of coda Susan Bourque’s last interview with the late Carolyn Heilbrun. (Remind me not to die—I would really not like to have people picking over my bones even as respectfully and lovingly as she does here...)

The original program is also included, which serves to remind us of the actual panel contexts for the papers and provides at least a listing of those omitted from the selection. Most of the plenaries made the cut though, for whatever reason, alas, Hermione Lee’s is not included—perhaps we will get to read it elsewhere. What a boon, though, to have Carol Christ, as present president of Smith College, drawing from Sophia Smith’s establishing “a schoolhouse of our own” in order to frame her inquiries about Virginia Woolf’s attitude toward formal education with the provocative question, “Why didn’t Virginia Woolf go to Smith?” As we know, Woolf was home schooled, but Christ goes on to show the ways in which Woolf’s “sense of exclusion from such an opportunity shaped her work in important ways” (9).

It is also as much a pleasure to read Lyndall Gordon’s piece as it was to hear it as a speech, posing the riddles of biography itself:

The biographic obsession is comic in its futility. The deliberately fragmented narrative, with its gaps and tantalizing glimpses, compels us to share the searcher’s effort and failure. Jacob’s room—his space, his leavings—should be full of clues. So it certainly would have been for Sherlock Holmes. The implied question is whether we can realistically deduce Jacob from his room, and the unfortunate answer is no. He remains a resonant absence—the most extreme form of elegiac loss. (15)

And there are some wonderful photographic images introducing Cheryl Mares’s “Woolf and the American Imaginary.”

Part II contains 13 essays “which form the heart of these selected proceedings,” the editor assures us, but they are so various, so new as to resist summing up or even quoting from in this brief “Miscellany” format. As it happens, none of the papers here printed did I attend (whatever was I doing!?), but they treat of Night and Day, Jacob’s Room, Mrs. Dalloway, and, appropriately, “On Being Ill.” The welcome reprinting of that remarkable essay by the local Paris Press was being celebrated at this conference (though the edition is, oddly enough, not listed in the bibliographies included). Orlando and Flush get some attention, The Waves...
almost none. Susan Gorsky studies food in Woolf’s life and writing, and class, psychology, even sewing turn up in these stimulating papers.

Part III, meant “to address Woolf’s legacy,” is even more miscellaneous, however. Here is found a place for an excerpt from Frances Spalding’s plenary piece on the portraits of Virginia Woolf by Vanessa Bell. One of these portraits has recently been donated to the Smith College Museum of Art and so serves as the cover for this book. Spalding speaks cogently about the effect of its facelessness: “[B]y denying us access to what Virginia Woolf looked like at a specific age and at a certain moment in time, Vanessa Bell opens up the portrait to a larger narration, a greater duration” (130). A less relevant inclusion is William Pryor’s memoir cum “self-advertisement” as he himself describes it, and more understandably, several papers on the portrayals of Woolf in The Hours and other tributes, ranging from the Indigo Girls to Ian McEwan’s novel Atonement. In the main, these pieces are, like so many of our own legacies, rather a haunted house. Given Sylvia Plath’s history with Smith College, it is entirely suitable that Pamela St. Clair’s study of Woolf’s “shadow across Sylvia Plath’s page,” be included.

Joyce Avreck Berkman’s claims for Woolf’s legacy in her own commitment to the Valley Women’s History Collective seems amply justified and I would warrant that Woolf’s writing provided impetus to more of the fabled feminist activism throughout the Hampshire Valley. However, when I offered a seminar in Woolf’s writing in 1967, it was the first ever there and Sylvia Plath’s depressing novel Bell Jar was safely sequestered in the locked stacks in the Mortimer Library at Smith College. Indeed, at that time the Sophia Smith Collection where Karen Kukil now curates was closed down. So many changes have we seen and so many of them can be credited to the long time influence of Virginia Woolf which makes it especially appropriate that Smith College should host one of our Woolf scholarly and festive Woolf Conferences.

It is axiomatic but still worth pointing out that publications such as this, both hard copy and electronic, help to extend the reach and the rewards of all those heroic labs done by the organizers such as Stephanie Cooper Schoen and her team of volunteers to bring us all together at these annual conferences. Thanks are due to all involved and especially to the editor, Karen Kukil.  

J.J. Wilson  
Sonoma State University

REVIEW:  
AUTHORS IN CONTEXT: VIRGINIA WOOLF  

As scholarship on Virginia Woolf continues to expand and deepen, it grows increasingly more challenging to find studies of her work that can both suit the common or undergraduate reader and reflect current research. Fortunately for us, Michael Whitworth’s new contribution to Oxford’s Authors in Context series is one such book.

Whitworth’s Virginia Woolf follows the series template by beginning with a thorough chronology and a brief biographical chapter, and then moving into five chapters which explore Woolf “in context”—several different contexts, in fact, including national, literary, philosophical, sociological, scientific and medical. The volume closes with an examination of the way Woolf’s work has been recontextualized through cinematic and fictional adaptations. These topical areas are common to each volume in the series, which includes studies of the Brontës, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Oscar Wilde.

New readers of Woolf will find many chapters enlightening, for Whitworth’s dominant method combines a cultural studies approach with close readings of Woolf’s work, thus allowing readers to get history and criticism in one clear, concise, and engaging place. His chapter on “The Literary Scene,” for example, positions Woolf as a writer, reviewer, and publisher in a changing market. Drawing links between Woolf’s life, her writing, and other work of the period, Whitworth explores the economics of publishing, the role of the canon, the place of the reviewer, the threat of censorship, and the aesthetic innovations of the Bloomsbury Group, thus painting a complex picture of the varied forces that shaped Woolf’s aesthetic development. In his chapter on “Philosophical Questions,” Whitworth shows how Woolf is wrestling with questions of perception, time, aesthetic representation, and identity in To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Dalloway, and The Waves, tying these novels directly to the work of Roger Fry, Henri Bergson, and G. E. Moore. These chapters establish a clear theoretical and historical foundation for studies of Woolf’s aesthetics and could be used effectively with undergraduates.

Veteran Woolf scholars may find chapters like the one on medical and scientific contexts intriguing as well, especially as it explores Woolf’s familiarity with theories of mental and physical health, the atom, telecommunications, and astronomy. Research on theories of mental health is perhaps the most familiar in Woolf circles, but Whitworth’s discussions of the natural sciences (which draw from some of his previous work) provide evidence that Woolf’s intellectual scope was much broader than many have recognized. While Whitworth’s textual readings are briefer in this chapter than in the philosophy chapter, the connections he forges are insightful, interesting and fresh.

The “recontextualization” chapter builds upon Whitworth’s historical work in the preceding chapters to present a sense of Woolf’s work at the dawn of the new millennium. Focusing on the films Orlando, To the Lighthouse, and Mrs. Dalloway and the novels The Hours and Mr. Dalloway, Whitworth presents the works and their critical receptions, and thus provides a launch pad for book groups, Woolf scholars, and classrooms to discuss the effects of these creative reimaginings.

This study has many strengths, among which are accessibility, coherence, and clarity. However, a few key problems with coverage and representation force me to recommend it with slight reservations. Readers will easily recognize that Whitworth is more interested in novels than essays and is most interested in Mrs. Dalloway. All other major works are referenced, but some (like Between the Acts) receive only passing mention. Furthermore, even though this volume is intended as a general introduction to the Woolf’s life, times, and work, the study occasionally errs in this mission—at times, by reducing a rich critical debate to single answer; at other times, by presenting somewhat eccentric readings as dominant interpretations; and at other times, by failing to strike a balance between author and context.

Whitworth’s treatment of Woolf’s biography and mental health may illuminate the first of these problems. In the biography chapter, he relies almost entirely upon Hermione Lee’s and Quentin Bell’s biographies of Woolf, thus eliding key critical debates surrounding sexual abuse in Woolf’s life. Similarly, his discussion of mental health in Woolf’s life and times is based most exclusively on Elaine Showalter’s vision in The Female Malady. Woolf scholars will notice the absence of references to critical work that may muddy Whitworth’s relatively coherent portrait—work like Louise DeSalvo’s or Thomas Caramagno’s.

Also, idiosyncratic readings emerge occasionally throughout the volume, and in some rather startling ways. Whitworth argues, for example, that Woolf references a common adultery plot in Mrs. Dalloway to suggest that Septimus Warren Smith may be Clarissa Dalloway’s illegitimate child (105), or that he may know why Elizabeth is the only one in her family with “Chinese eyes” (144). He also focuses on the obscure rather than the obvious in places; for example, he suggests that Woolf uses the school environment of The Waves to criticize anti-German movements in education, but neglects the role of Miss Kilman in Mrs. Dalloway.
Whitworth is generally quite good at showing how Woolf’s work operates in and responds to its contexts. However, at times, he spends considerable time attending to “contexts” that do not readily illuminate Woolf’s writing. His second chapter, “The Fabric of Society,” struggles most with this problem. It covers many and varied aspects of England’s history, including analysis of struggles with Irish Home Rule, with London’s Municipal Boards, and with housing acts. While interesting, they are not connected with Woolf’s writing in meaningful ways, and Whitworth’s otherwise fluid and elegant prose seems choppy and strained. In this chapter particularly, he spends a good deal of time exploring the context without placing the author within it.

These concerns should not condemn the volume, however. Indeed, with the exception of Chapter Two, the other chapters provide valuable models of critical inquiry and can readily serve as introductions to the field. Making students aware of some places where Whitworth errs could produce interesting conversation points in classrooms where his study might serve as supplementary reading. As is intended, Whitworth’s volume will effectively support the common reader’s quest for more information, greater understanding, and deeper appreciation for Woolf’s artistry. And I think that would please the subject of his book.

Meg Albrinck
Lakeland College

REVIEW:
SNAPSHOTS OF BLOOMSBURY: THE PRIVATE LIVES OF VIRGINIA WOOLF AND VANESSA BELL

Maggie Humm’s latest book, which she characterizes in the preface as “a companion volume” to her Modernist Women and Visual Cultures (Rutgers 2003), serves well in that capacity but adds significantly to the dialogic studies of Woolf and Bell that integrate their lives and arts, memories and aesthetics, and culture and communities (viii). While the earlier book considered a range of questions about modernism, gender, and visual studies, this very attractive volume more narrowly focuses on Bloomsbury and its connected environs, as represented in and through the Woolfs’ and Bell’s photographs and, in particular, their photographic albums. In addition, Humm undertakes to provide us with the theoretical tools to understand the photographs and the albums, the latter idea an important intervention into Woolf scholarship and in visual culture studies generally. Many of the images in Humm’s book will be familiar to Woolf scholars and, as she points out, some of those that picture Virginia Woolf are indeed iconic, “familiar to those who have never read her writing” (vii). By exhibiting those images and the less familiar ones together in context of their album placement, and in contemporaneous dialogue with the other sister’s albums, this book provides a fresh way to see and to think about Bloomsbury life and death in connection with photographic remembrance.

The book is organized into three main parts: the first divides its textual discussion of the images and their context into three relatively brief chapters; the second is comprised by the images; and the third contains a comprehensive catalogue of the Monks House photographic albums, a valuable research apparatus in itself. Humm has organized the images in Part Two, many of which are presented as facsimiles of the album’s pages (complete with captions), chronologically and dialogically: that is, they are divided into sections corresponding to the time periods covered by the temporal divisions of the textual overview in Part One, and in each of these sections, the Monks House albums come before Bell’s albums. This arrangement successfully accomplishes two things for readers: they are provided with a historical perspective, and they get a sense of how the Woolfs and Bell enriched their conversation through amateur photography and its ensuing display. Part Three provides a wealth of information that should interest Woolf scholars in further studies of the Bloomsbury photographic history and culture; but it also indicates the kinds of choices that Humm made about what to include in her volume.

Humm’s sumptuous book is accentuated by the analysis that she offers in the first section, which addresses several interrelated complications. The ideas that she draws upon to address amateur photography, the evaluation of photo albums, and the complexities of “gender structures, cultural locations, and psycho-biographical details in the photos” is eclectic and far-reaching. As Humm suggests, relevant theoretical models are insufficient (4). Thus, she proceeds to utilize Sturken, Barthes, Sonntag, Benjamin, and others to assess the photographs; Foucault’s “heterotopological” model to analyze the way that the albums organize space and stage photographic encounters in portraiture exchanges; and Freud’s conceptualization of psychic formations and memory. She traces the evolution in the Woolfs’ and Bell’s photo albums from their early, more experimental phase, when “the camera viewpoints and framing look attentively beyond the snapshot moment into the sisters’ past and outward into moments of modernity” (14), to their photographic practices in the 1930s, when the albums explore “the affective relations among Bell’s and the Woolfs’ photographs, visual memories, and multiple experiences of death” (38). Indeed, there is much here to negotiate, and Humm’s book works through a broad range of photography analysis, modernist studies, Woolf studies, gender studies, and post-structural theory to accomplish its ends. For Woolf scholars in particular, Humm’s insights about the function of Woolfs’ albums and the photographs in them are especially helpful; she makes a persuasive case for their gendered aspects (5), for their therapeutic and ontological functions (7), for their role in visual storytelling (8), for their assuagement of longing for a confirmed familial world (8), for their connections to an elegiac art (11), and for their role as memento mori (16).

This book provides a substantially fresh venue in Woolf studies, attending to popular material culture and its contexts by balancing those concerns against Bloomsbury avant-garde aesthetic work. The least successful section of the book for me is the analogical argument in the third chapter of Part One, “The 1930s,” which laboriously links Freud’s analysis of memory and generational tensions surrounding his father to Woolf’s own defense mechanisms and displacements. This argument does not match the elegance of Humm’s use of Foucault to analyze space and other “heteropolies of past and present” in Bell’s and the Woolfs’ “hybrid entities” (20), an argument that succeeds in elevating these “marginal minute of modernism” (14) into material that bears our repeated and sustained attention. On the whole, it is the thoughtfulness exemplified by this latter analysis that distinguishes Humm’s work as an important intervention in new modernist studies and in assessments of Bloomsbury.

Thaine Stevens
Sonoma State University

REVIEW:
HOW TO MAKE IT AS A WOMAN: COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY FROM VICTORIA TO THE PRESENT

Those of us who have heard Alison Booth speak at the Woolf conferences or at other venues in recent years have known that she was hard at work on a book about collective biography, or as she calls it “prosopography.” Little prepared me, however, for the extraordinary achievement that is her book How To make it as a Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present. The scholarship in evidence here is daunting: Booth has consulted hundreds of
The sheer number of collective biographies included in this study is worthy of mention for other reasons as well. To put it bluntly, who knew? Booth has mustered evidence of a very broad and long-term fascination with collective biography within British literary history, and an acceleration of interest in the genre in both Britain and the US between the eighteen-thirties and the nineteenth-forties. That so many attempts to record the lives of women were made in this period, and that as a general rule they fall into the prosopography genre, is certainly something we were never taught in history class. This is knowledge that shifts paradigms: if women were being chronicled in such great numbers why did those books slip into oblivion? If women were so popular as subjects both for readers and writers, why did later generations of readers find it so difficult to discover them? If, by 1927, there were hundreds of books chronicling the lives of important women, many of them also written by women, why did Virginia Woolf write in Three Guineas that women appear “only in their husband’s biographies” (77)? Booth makes strong claims in her Introduction and in her chapter on Woolf that the prevalence of these collective biographies argues for a different view of the collective past of women than Woolf and many of her contemporaries would have described. Booth suggests that we pay attention to what she terms the “misrecognition” (227) or even erasure of the presence of female prosopographies, and question why the summons to record women’s lives seems to demand to be renewed in every generation. Certainly, one hopes that after this book their presence will forever be documented.

The Introduction to this book where Booth makes her general claims about female prosopography, assimilates data from broad swathes of the bibliography, and sorts the texts into types and chronologies. It is fascinating to see how the same collective biography is published with different titles (and to different purposes) in various decades, and to watch the transformation of key figures like Pocahontas or Florence Nightingale. In fact much of the interest of this book, whether in the broad earlier chapters—or in the last one, on images of Queen Victoria—lies in seeing how the shaping of collective biographies of women served varying cultural and political purposes over the course of the period from 1830 to 1940. When and how did the life of the woman writer become important to include? How and why did a figure like Victoria become both the model of ordinary bourgeois womanhood and a heroic queenly idol?

The chapters that follow each take up a particular issue or question in the history of collective biography of women. We have chapters on biographies that present women as models of conduct, as heroic types, and as ministering angels. Here is where this book really gets fun. Booth gives us glimpses into a variety of different books, describing the subjects of the biographies as well as the conditions of authorship and readership. Booth takes up important questions concerning class and the biographical project, pointing out how many of the subjects were not of the leisure classes, and argues in various chapters that this aspect may in part account for their eventual erasure from history. The fact of women’s work also permeates these prosopographies, and not just in the later years covered, so that we have a new view of women’s history that claims that women were recognized and celebrated for their work in the world in periods where we usually claim they were not. As Booth puts it, in writing about biographies of literary women:

> my civic purpose [. . .] is to illustrate the effect of collective life narratives of women of letters, who as subjects, presenters, and audience mutually shape women’s cultural agency. It is an old girl network that long predates second wave feminist commitments. (183)

Booth also addresses the question of race in a chapter here devoted primarily to American collections of the end of the nineteenth century. However, as she remarks in one of her early footnotes, it is clear that she is much less an expert on the American sources and contexts than on the British, and this lack of depth shows up in this chapter. Indeed, one wishes throughout the book for more clear efforts to delineate the differences between British and American prosopography. For example, the eugenicist support for a hierarchy of races which emerges in some of these collections at the turn of the twentieth century, certainly has different resonance in the US, where a call for Anglo-Saxon womanhood also raises questions about American national identity as separate from Great Britain. This problem also arises in the final very interesting chapter on ideas of Queen Victoria herself, which leaps from nineteenth century British notions to those of the feminist scholars of 1970s America. While the discussion of the paradoxical portraits of Victoria as both ordinary and queenly in Britain are fascinating, they surely deserve to be distinguished from American ideas about Victoria, if only because in the American context a monarch is never ordinary. As far as the contemporary context is concerned, I would have wished for a somewhat broader scope. The image from Jamaica Kincaid’s A Small Place in which she describes learning about Queen Victoria in school in Antigua and being made to celebrate her birthday, kept springing to mind. The colonial viewpoint would really shift our perspective on Victoria’s ordinariness.

In her section on Virginia Woolf, Booth offers an important reconsideration of A Room of One’s Own, as well as Three Guineas and Woolf’s essay “The New Biography.” She argues that in defining the genre of biography as masculine, Woolf unwittingly participates in minimizing the many contributions women had already made to biography and that, in focusing on “full-length solo lives” (228), Woolf failed to record her own immersion in the tradition of prosopography. Booth points out how many of Woolf’s own sources for A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas might be called collective biography, as could Life as We Have Known It to which Woolf contributed an introductory letter. Booth is also provocative in her claim that Woolf skipped over much that existed in the tradition because it “appeared too substantially personal (like women writers who expose their anger) or too domesticated by common recognition” (232). While it is true that “to Woolf, it seems, the lost biography is much more desirable than the one ready to hand” (232), one might have hoped for a longer treatment here of the ways in which Woolf herself sought to repopulate the female tradition with her life narratives, whether fictional or real. Otherwise, what at times emerges from this excellent study is a picture of Woolf as unaware of the forces shaping her understanding of women’s history and unclear what to do about them. If as Booth so aptly puts it, “the very project of feminist studies indeed seems to require a double thesis of feminine repression and female agency” (271), then Woolf seems to participate on both sides of the discussion.

It must be said, finally, that whatever quibbles we might have with Alison Booth’s readings of particular texts (and I don’t think the Woolf material is as strong as other sections), How to Make It as a Woman, makes its mark, like its subject matter, in its ability to collect in one volume an extraordinary number of sources and to establish without a doubt the strong presence of women’s lives in English language written history over the past two centuries. That, in and of itself, is a major achievement.

Jessica Berman
UMBC

**REVIEW:**

**THE LETTERS OF LYTTON STRACHEY**


Letters, Lytton Strachey remarked to Ottoline Morrell on reading a volume of not very distinguished examples, might be “the only really satisfactory form of literature. They give one the facts so amazingly. . . . I felt when I’d got to the end that I’d lived for years in that set” (329). Familiar though Michael Holroyd's
magisterial biography has made “the facts,” this hefty cross-section of his own letters captures Lytton Strachey Live and offers an intimate armchair tour of his life and times. We—a.k.a. posterity—see to hang over the writer’s shoulder as, from one sling chair after another on extended visits to far-flung friends in their remarkable rooms and houses as well as from his own successive homes and many hotels, his prismatic sensibility refracts infinite facts into colorful, scintillating prose.

The author (ultimately) of Eminent Victorians, Queen Victoria, and Elizabeth and Essex entertains his correspondents with brilliant sketches of human character, social life, sexual mores, political personages and controversies, houses, landscapes, things, books, animals domestic and wild, the joys, surprises, frustrations, and disappointments of reading, the tortures of writing, the pleasures and discomforts of travel, the (early) downs and (later) considerable ups of his finances (did Elizabeth and Essex really clear royalties of £223,847.29 “in 2002 purchasing power” in its first few months? [596]), and, of course, his multifarious adventures in love, fancy, fantasy, and friendship. As Strachey shuttles a lively play of scenes, stories, thoughts, feelings, desires, and gossip into Bloomsbury’s communicative web, the epistolary mode draws an invisible curtain before what is for us the past but for the letter writer the future. The letters sweep us back in time and we apprehend “the facts” as they unfold.

No doubt Strachey would relish his enduring role as poster child for free speech in sexual matters. In 1906 he chastised Leonard Woolf for his cowardly betrayal in destroying a “chef-d’œuvre” of a letter graphically recounting (as Lytton summarizes it) an encounter between Arthur Hobhouse and John Maynard Keynes: “Your talking about ‘healthy’ vice! Really! Really! . . . if it really is only fright, why not just post them back?” (116). A few months later he reported a triumph of scholarly sleuthing regarding “a mysterious omission” in an edition of Gray’s commonplace books, to the effect that the reason the “poor dear Voltaire” blasphemed violently while dining with the Pope was not “bad health” but bitter memories of sexual abuse inflicted on him in childhood by Jesuit teachers (125).

On the personal front, Lytton’s letters to his closest confidants (Leonard, brother James, cousin Mary Hutchinson, lovers Duncan Grant, Ralph Partridge, Roger Senhouse, his “chère bêbè” Carrington) document his quest for an Eros now irresistibly tantalizing, now cruelly elusive, their complex tones ranging from the lurid to the lyric, from poignant “weeping over the web of life” (109-10) to mixed hilarity and regret at having suddenly recognized, in the nick of time, an “attractive tart” whom he was maneuvering to pick up in the National Gallery as the Prince of Wales: “I fled, perhaps foolishly—perhaps it might have been the beginning of a really entertaining affair” (621).

The letters, of course, range far beyond sexuality. Lytton grieves over Thoby Stephen’s sudden death at twenty-six, writing Leonard, “our lives seem deadly blank” (114); Leonard replies, “It is appalling to think that it is only death that makes it altogether clear what he was to us” (qtd. in Spotts). He joins the suffrage movement: “Everyone in this household is a ‘Suffragette,’ or at least a Suffragist. . . . Votes for Women!” (121-3). He fills pages with his horror of the war, his activist resistance to conscription, his disgust at British authorities’ exploitation of anti-German riots, his appalled witness of Bertrand Russell’s trial. “Où me cacher? Fuyons dans la nuit infernale,” he laments, after his revered Racine; “But even in Hell, no doubt, the Times appears on the breakfast table” (211). When Hogarth issues Two Stories, he tells Leonard that Virginia’s “is a work of genius. The liquidity of the style fills me with envy: really some of the sentences!—How on earth does she manage to make the English language float and float! And then the wonderful way in which the modern point of view is suggested. Tiens!” (358). He lavishes praise on The Voyage Out (“Oh, it’s very, very unvictorian!” [270]) and Jacob’s Room (“poetry . . . and as such I prophesy immortal . . . I am such a Bonamy” [523]) but worries about the “lack of copulation—either actual or implied” in Mrs. Dalloway (and forgetting the Ramsays’ eight children) To the Lighthouse (564). Virginia is delighted when he wishes to dedicate Queen Victoria to “V. W.”—“Only my inordinate vanity whispers might it not be Virginia Woolf in full?” so that no “Victoria Worms or Vincent Woodhouse” can poach her glory (476).

Paul Levy has done scholars of Bloomsbury, modernism and Woolf a great service in selecting, editing and publishing these letters, enhanced by an engaging introduction and deep supporting scholarship. It must also be said that he can be (as Lytton said of an editor of Congreve) “extremely trying and much too much in evidence” (529). Beside the judicious and meticulous edition of Woolf’s Letters by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, Levy’s chatty, impressionist headnotes offer no clear advantage; in this reader’s experience, they put the cart before the horse and embody a somewhat scattered approach to annotation. (Granted, it’s fascinating that George Bergen may be the only person to have slept with Lytton and Lillian Hellman; but why did Maynard insist on setting Charleston’s clocks two hours forward in the summer of 1920?) Still, the letters themselves sparkle and shine, the editorial apparatus is extremely helpful, and we readers owe heartfelt thanks to their editor and publisher for making them widely available.

Christine Froula
Northwestern University

We glimpse Virginia in these letters beginning in 1901, when Lytton tells Leonard he has met Thoby “the Goth” Stephen’s “nice though wild family—two sisters very pretty” (6). In 1904 he describes Virginia as “rather wonderful—quite witty, full of things to say, and absolutely out of rapport with reality” (43). In February 1909, Leonard writes from Ceylon that he longs to propose to Virginia. Just before receiving this letter (and copulating “again” with Duncan Grant), Lytton proposes first to Leonard (“If only you would come home and live with me in a small and commodious flat I should be perfectly happy” [172]) and then to Virginia, only to recoil in panic: “Her sense was absolute, and at times her supremacy was so great that I quavered” (173-4). When Leonard’s letter arrives, Lytton falls on his neck in relief: “You would be great enough, and you’d have too the immense advantage of physical desire. . . . If you came and proposed she’d accept. She really really would” (174). In August he is still exhorting prophetically,

Your destiny is clearly marked out for you, but will you allow it to work? You must marry Virginia. She’s sitting waiting for you, is there any objection? She’s the only woman in the world with sufficient brains; it’s a miracle that she should exist; but if you’re not careful you’ll lose the opportunity. (185)

Mission accomplished, Lytton paints for Virginia his vision of the “amazing” “literature of the future”—one she later adapts for A Room of One’s Own: “At last it’ll tell the truth, and be indecent, and amusing, and romantic, and even (after about 100 years) be written well. Quelle joie!—To live in those days, when books will pour out from the press reeking with all the filth of Petronius, all the frenzy of Dostoevsky, all the romance of the Arabian Nights, and all the exquisiteness of Voltaire!” (211). When Hogarth issues Two Stories, he tells Leonard that Virginia’s “is a work of genius. The liquidity of the style fills me with envy: really some of the sentences!—How on earth does she manage to make the English language float and float? And then the wonderful way in which the modern point of view is suggested. Tiens!” (358). He lavishes praise on The Voyage Out (“Oh, it’s very, very unvictorian!” [270]) and Jacob’s Room (“poetry . . . and as such I prophesy immortal . . . I am such a Bonamy” [523]) but worries about the “lack of copulation—either actual or implied” in Mrs. Dalloway (and forgetting the Ramsays’ eight children) To the Lighthouse (564). Virginia is delighted when he wishes to dedicate Queen Victoria to “V. W.”—“Only my inordinate vanity whispers might it not be Virginia Woolf in full?” so that no “Victoria Worms or Vincent Woodhouse” can poach her glory (476).

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RITUAL UNBOUND: READING SACRIFICE IN MODERNIST FICTION


“‘We cannot do without the scapegoat.’ So reads the provocative epigraph to Thomas J. Cousineau’s polemical study of Anglo-American modernists Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Virginia Woolf. Ritual Unbound applies the ideas of René Girard to the fictions of Woolf and her contemporary writers. In a notable interview, Girard himself describes The Waves as ‘a truly unique masterpiece’ (133). With her concerted defense of outsiders, her acute grasp of oppression, and her nuanced conception of interiority, Woolf has previously attracted scholars indebted to Girard’s research such as Christine Froula and William A. Johnsen. Cousineau, too, follows the controversial French theorist by stressing that unwarranted ostracism configures human interaction. Storytellers, however, may potentially safeguard modes of ‘non-sacrificial community’ by unmasking reciprocal antagonisms (Cousineau 18). An ambitious agenda thus drives this monograph on modernism. Cousineau remains sensitive to the role of class in the construction of designated others while undermining the prevailing focus on racial and sexual difference in modernist literature. Unexpected insights on canonical texts derive from his close readings as well as his relentless dedication to Girard’s ideal of social demystification. Yet at times, Cousineau’s reluctance to disclose and critique his favored paradigm signals important limitations in his approach.

Each chapter of Ritual Unbound engages one modern fiction: The Turn of the Screw, Heart of Darkness, The Good Soldier, The Great Gatsby, and To the Lighthouse. In the process, Cousineau aims to overturn established interpretations by influential critics including Chinua Achebe, Denis Donoghue, Judith Fetterley and Edmund Wilson. Cousineau’s five chosen works form part of a “distinctive subgroup” of modernist literature because they simultaneously endorse and contest scapegoating practices (17). Even in experimental prose, he explains, unreliable narrators may displace blame, thereby restaging atavistic rites of expulsion. But Cousineau credits such self-serving mystifications by underscoring formal designs, and, by implication, authorial intentions. He considers both mythic and purportedly realistic dimensions of each fiction; in his analyses of occluded patterns, well-rehearsed psychological readings often yield to the less familiar elaboration of intergroup tensions. Cousineau suggests that the subtext of The Turn of the Screw, for example, highlights the governess’s destructive “longing for priority” rather than the malevolent designs of ghosts or repressed sexual desire (45). Drawing on different facets of Girard’s wide-ranging career, Cousineau exposes the ambivalent status of the sacrificial motif in modernist fiction. As he indicates, the conscious denunciation of scapegoating cannot engender its disappearance; on the contrary, such assertions may actually accompany accusatory gestures.

The final chapter on To the Lighthouse links Woolf with her predecessors; significantly, though, her omniscient narrator frustrates the communal solidarity borne of scapegoating. Here, Cousineau incorporates scholarship by James M. Haule, Hermione Lee, Jane Lilienfeld, J. Hills Miller and Ellen Temper. He perceives parallels between James Ramsay, who steers to the Lighthouse, and Lily Briscoe, who completes her painting. Somewhat surprisingly, Cousineau provisionally identifies the “chief perpetrators” of “atavistic ritual” in the third segment of the novel as Lily, James, and Cam Ramsay (161). With respect to Lily specifically, Cousineau simplifies the vexed problems of tradition and innovation for the woman artist. He rightly submits that Charles Tansley’s misogynist dictum, “Women can’t paint, women can’t write” encapsulates cultural prohibitions against female creativity (Woolf 67). Yet Cousineau positions Mr. Ramsay as the undisputed center of culture and an unjustly appointed scapegoat, effectively disregarding the exclusions sustaining patriarchal privilege. In this view, Lily succeeds because she “accommodates” rather than rejects male authority (28). Cousineau buttresses his argument by maintaining that draft revisions of “Time Passes” progressively efface marks of gender difference. Needless to say, the commentator neglects the asymmetrical economies of Victorian domestic ideology; he also ignores the boar’s skull in “The Window.” Paradoxically, Cousineau advocates “non-exclusionary relationship with the other” even as he promotes the uncritical acceptance of dominant norms and traditions (162).

For the most part, Ritual Unbound assumes familiarity with the Girardian paradigm. Yet pivotal concepts require more detailed explication, namely desire, ritual, sacrifice, and surrogate victimage. Throughout, Cousineau seems to conflate aggression, conflict, and scapegoating; the alleged “complicity” of the abstract reader also warrants further examination (18). He proposes to “refine” Girard’s “master model” without circumscribing the model itself, one which asserts the transcultural and transhistorical basis of community (24). Cousineau arguably manifests the rivalry he interrogates, moreover, when he implies that feminist “misreadings” of To the Lighthouse debunk gender hierarchies only to perpetuate scapegoating practices (149). In this connection, Sarah Kofman, Toril Moi, and Susan Nowak challenge Girard’s overarching claims regarding gender and sexuality.

To summarize, then, Cousineau’s book left me with many unanswered questions; I conclude with two associated lines of inquiry. How might heterogeneous models of community foster alternative approaches to scapegoating in modern culture? And how might Woolf scholars attend to the persecution dynamics Cousineau delineates even as they uphold local contexts rather than global hypotheses?

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Works Cited and Consulted


REVIEW: 
**LETTERS TO VIRGINIA WOOLF**

Woolf scholar and poet Lisa Williams frames her memoir with segments on 9/11/2001 and the anniversary of the World Trade Center tragedy. Accounts of her miscarriages, infertility treatments, and final happy birth of her son—which would interest many readers beyond fellow New Yorkers who experienced the tragedy—together with impressions while doing research in the Monks House Papers make up the middle portion. Williams has prefaced most segments or “letters” to Virginia Woolf with quotations from Woolf on Woolfian themes or convictions. Williams’s experience attests to the contemporary relevance of these passages.

Predictably, the “chimneys and the coast-guard [. . .] [and] overpowering sorrow” anti-war passage from Jacob’s Room and Septimus Smith’s solution of refusing to feel when overwhelmed by memories of violence are referred to in the 9/11 opening segments. On the anniversary of the tragedy, Williams returns to Septimus’s vision of the world threatening “to burst into flames” and asks, “Were you Virginia, some prophet, peering into the terrors of the next century?” (77).

Woolf said that she failed to solve the challenge of “telling the truth about my own experiences as a body” (“Professions for Women” 241), a challenge that Williams meets successfully in describing her very different bodily experiences—miscarriages, infertility treatments and, finally, triumphantly giving birth. Williams had completed her doctorate and begun teaching before marrying at 38. Her early-term miscarriages are explained baldly as being caused by “old eggs.” She feels “crone-hood” descend on her. Her second dead fetus is removed from her womb at an abortion clinic, where the brisk, dehumanizing treatment of patients is eye-opening. Also startling are two matter-of-fact accounts of Williams’s sexual exploitation in her teens, by a teacher and an admired anti-war activist. Thus, Williams’ teen-age bodily experience is closer to Woolf’s. Williams perhaps wisely refrains from comparisons and leaves readers to draw their own conclusions about the universality of this kind of sexual initiation. Finally, lyrical passages from The Waves, surprising in the context of fertility treatments, hold at bay dehumanizing aspects of the experience.

Adding memoirist to her own professions, Lisa Williams teaches at Ramapo College of New Jersey and is also the author of The Artist as Outsider in the Novels of Toni Morrison and Virginia Woolf (2000).

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documents in order to ascribe to them their real meaning. In the present case, V. Woolf-James Joyce, we have three levels of statements.

First, the intimate, the personal, the instinctive; such is V. Woolf’s idea of Joyce’s person, which reveals her contempt, even her loathing for the man whom she deems a “self taught workman [. . .] a queasy undergraduate scratching its pimples” (A Writer’s Diary 47). She does not “confuse judgment by social class with literary criticism” as Ellmann suggests (James Joyce 607), but had she known more about the man, about his hyper megalomania, his generalized irresponsibility, his contempt for everybody, his drinking habits, all traits so contrary to her own standards, she could have reacted like Katherine Mansfield: “I can’t get over the feeling of wet linoleum and unemptied pails and far worse horrors in the house of his mind—he’s so terribly un-fine; that’s what it amounts to” (qtd. in Ellmann 791). One of the diary’s functions is precisely to offer an outlet to such impressions. This blameable dash of criticism fiction may counterbalance a contradictory one.

Second, the private reflections on her work: projects, problems, intuitions, discoveries, etc. [. . .] which may be labelled as “writing notes” in opposition to “reading notes”; however, since, as I developed in “Virginia Woolf, a Multifaceted Brain, a Single Purpose,” “The novelist and the critic in V. Woolf entertain a complex relationship of a dynamic nature,” the “writing notes” may often merge and thus a very close analysis of the context is essential if one wants to avoid fanciful interpretations. As the mention “Modern Novels (Joyce)” on the holograph notebook referred to by S. Henke clearly indicates, this document is primarily the “reading-writing notes” of the critic in view of her essay published under that title in the TLS, 10 April 1919. “Mrs Dalloway”—the sketch, not yet the novel—is first mentioned in the diary (June 1922, three years after the publication of “Modern Fiction”). Although parallel to and part of novel writing, V. Woolf kept in her mind a possible theory of the novel and was faced with technical problems of her own; what she jots down in 1919 cannot be considered verbatim as influential in 1922. These notes are an intermediate stage of thought between the intellectual reaction to Ulysses and the finally formal public article, almost a rough copy to be trimmed off to a standard level of current criticism. This apparent digression on methodology may help better understand V. Woolf’s relationship with her contemporary writers (Guiguet, Preface, Contemporary Writers).

Even though, as S. Henke suggests, Ulysses and Mrs Dalloway may be summarized as a June day of the two—hero- heroine—in a capitol city, even if we add that Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, like Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, are bound together by a deep and significant relationship, such similitudes are immediately denied by the fundamental difference of relationship binding both pairs. All the possible elements of comparison between both novels would thus explode at first sight. To confirm the unbridgeable distance that separates Mrs Dalloway from Ulysses, I will first oppose V. Woolf’s declared aims to Joyce’s own, and then the summaries of the finished products. “Mrs Dalloway has branched into a book; and I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane” (A Writer’s Diary 52). “I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticize the social system and show it at work at its most intense” (A Writer’s Diary 57). “I am stuffed with ideas for it, I feel I can use up everything I’ve ever thought” (A Writer’s Diary 61). On 6 September 1922, she notes: “Finished Ulysses and thought it a misfire.” Only a few days later “Mrs Dalloway has branched into a book.” No further mention of Joyce either “inspirational” or other!

Joyce’s real purpose is more difficult to extract from what he said or wrote about his work. An actor, a conjurer, a self-advertising agent, a professional hoaxer, none of his statements are to be taken at their face value. The only one which popped up under different forms and which, one century later, proved trustworthy, is that the professors whom he despised—should, in secula seculorum, devote their lives to unravelling the tangled enigmas encompassing human experience from Homeric times to contemporary Dublin. His megalomania may be satisfied: he still is—and will remain, according to the authorized judgment of the day, the greatest writer of the century. What he wrote to Claude Sykes in 1921, although concerning only one section of Ulysses, gives an idea of the way his thoughts elaborated the substance of his books, or rather, how he wanted people to believe his genial brain worked: he was “struggling with the acidities of Ithaca—a mathematico-astronomico-physico-geometro-chemico sublimation of Bloom and Stephen (devil take ’em both) to prepare for the final amplitudinosly curvilinear episode Penelope” (Ellmann 642). Unable to choose between saying it is funny or the gibberish of a deranged mind, unless it is only pretentious—or pretence, I am inclined to say it is all this together, and as such, the essential James Joyce. No wonder that V. Woolf, W. B. Yeats, C. J. Jung and others were bored by the “gigantic opus” (Joyce, The Centennial Symposium).

If we take Maria Tymoczko’s remark, “The methods of comparative mythology that Joyce implicitly depends on in Ulysses permit the tale to be both an odyssey and an ihram or an odyssey and a taking of Ireland—or for that matter, to be also a peripatetic retelling of Dante’s Comedia, Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Goethe’s Faust” (341) (I suggest including Cervantes’ Don Quixote) as a possible summary of a novel resulting from the mental process sketched in Joyce’s quotation above, I will use it as a foil to Mrs Dalloway as I see it. Keeping in mind V. Woolf’s revelations quoted earlier, a double set of counterpoints defines both the form and the subject of her novel: sanity-insanity, Clarissa-Septimus; these two never meet but they go, on parallel lines, for the long stretch of their lives such as they are evoked. Time and duration are used in their Bergsonian sense; Big Ben’s strokes put rhythm in the day’s concrete activities, which, from their present reality, reverberate into imaginative memories. Throughout the whole book we may speak of interplay of surface and depth being the very formal substance of life as V. Woolf wanted to express it.

I leave it to the reader to conclude whether the hotchpotch of Ulysses, pretending to Aquinas’s Suma status, has anything in common or not with the compact life vision of Mrs Dalloway. For me, any attempt to find a relationship between them is the acrobatic feat of a talented critic. Amongst the whole profession of professors to whom Joyce threw his books for food, the wary who did not pounce on this delusive fare are sober creatures who stick to a steady pace.

Jean Guiguet

Works Cited


The officers of the International Virginia Woolf Society have decided that the most interesting thing we can offer you is a set of notes from the General Meeting of the International Virginia Woolf Society, held at the Woolf Conference in Birmingham, June 24, 2006. Thanks go to Anne Ryan Hanafin, Member-at-Large, for her careful recording.

Thaine Stearns, our Secretary-Treasurer, presented a brief overview of IVWS finances. He characterized the society’s financial situation as “healthy,” with a balance over $21,000. Thaine estimated that IVWS has 400-500 paying members. The major expenses incurred the preceding year at MLA in Philadelphia where Woolfians dined at a restaurant were offset in December 2005 by holding the Washington DC MLA Woolf Society party at Karen Levenback’s home in Tacoma Park.

Thaine proposed that IVWS use some of its financial surplus to assist members in attending conferences, perhaps as a supplement to the travel fund or by starting an endowment. There was a lively discussion regarding the existing travel fund and the criteria for distributing grants. The group was open to the idea of changing the by-laws in order to implement a more formal travel fund policy in line with current grant-making standards. Madelyn Detloff, our Vice President and co-coordinator of the next Virginia Woolf International Conference, and Vara Neverow, our past President and editor of the Miscellany offered to compose and circulate a draft policy for review.

It was also proposed that IVWS contribute to the cost of publishing the 2006 conference proceedings, either through a direct grant or a discount to members purchasing the document.

Anne Ryan Hanafin proposed that IVWS take a fresh look at the position of Member-at-Large and think about ways to use this resource to reach new audiences. In particular she suggested a “Woolf 101” style curriculum to introduce VW and her works to readers whose previous encounters with Woolf might only extend to popular culture. Anne suggested that the IVWS one-day symposium for the Smithsonian Associates in 2003 be used as a model. During the discussion that followed, there were many excellent suggestions from the group regarding targeted outreach plans, including: informal “recruiting events” at community colleges and libraries; outreach to high school students, possibly in conjunction with the annual conference; a place on the current web site for common readers or a new Web site and/or “Woolf Wiki”; and member-hosted “common text seminars” or reading groups. The group was particularly enthusiastic about the idea of hosting an event or series of events to mark VW’s birthday, i.e., a “Woolf Week.” Bonnie Kime Scott, our President, welcomes news of any recent events of this type that members are aware of. A future Society Column or Newsletter or the web site could be used to share these news tidbits.

Those present also discussed ways to encourage Woolfians to attend the MLA Party, which this year will be held on December 28. In addition to announcements and directions to be made available at sessions and in the Newsletter, regulars are encouraged to bring along somebody new.

For information on the MLA 2006 conference in Philadelphia and the MLA Woolf Society party, see page 3.

Vara suggested that IVWS think about the marketing of merchandise or “Woolfiana,” given the success of Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain in this area. A Woolf Calendar was the most popular suggestion, and the officers will follow up on this. Other merchandising ideas are welcome. Please send these to Bonnie at bkscott@mail.sdsu.edu, who will follow up with plans.

Bonnie asked the group to keep in mind possible venues for future IVWS conferences, and to contact her with any suggestions so that she could refer interested parties to Mark Hussey, who reviews and approves the requests to host the event. The idea of a future conference in Ireland, possibly with links to Joyce, modernism, and/or women’s studies, was mentioned.

All in all the Woolfian Boundaries Birmingham Conference provided a great opportunity for new officers to come together, appreciate all that has been put in place for the organization and plan for the future. We very much look forward to seeing you at MLA.

Bonnie Kime Scott
President, International Virginia Woolf Society

REFLECTIONS ON A CONFERENCE
Ann Bissell, Steve Ellis, Deborah Parsons and Kathryn Simpson did an incredible amount of work to make Woolfian Boundaries, the Birmingham, UK Woolf conference, come together. Highlights of this extraordinary event were the opening reception in the Town Hall, the plenary session at which Ruth Gruber spoke movingly of her experiences as a journalist, Christopher Reed’s delightful presentation on what he termed the “amusing” phase of modernism, the sumptuous banquet at the University of Birmingham, Melba Cuddy-Keane’s closing keynote speech, and, of course, all of the excellent papers, and chatting with Cecil Woolf and Jean Moorcroft Wilson over tea and biscuits during the breaks. The Second City itself was wonderful too with excellent restaurants, beautiful buildings, a huge ferris wheel, lovely canals and an extraordinary museum to mention just a few features. All Woolfians who attended the event thank the organizers for their extraordinary efforts.

Anon.