The success of the recent 2009 Woolf conference on Woolf and the City, hosted by Anne Fernald at the Fordham, Lincoln Center campus, amply demonstrates that scholarship on Woolf and the city is flourishing—one might even say booming. As in so much of Woolf’s work, thematic focus on one issue or idea is frequently complemented by concentration on its opposite. So at the conference and in this issue of the Miscellany, work on the urban Woolf sometimes evokes comparison and/or comment on her rural haunts and references.

Scholarship on Woolf and the city can be divided into three phases or moments, all of which are still useful, active, and interactive. First there are the descriptive studies which provide a foundational historical context in facts by mapping, listing, and/or otherwise documenting the landscape of London in Woolf’s work as well as tracing the fictional and biographical paths of Woolf’s life and works in the city. The careful cataloguing of the appearances of London in Woolf’s major novels by Dorothy Brewster’s in Virginia Woolf’s London, first published in 1960, is an early example of this mode. In a similar vein are the many attempts to map out the various walks in Mrs. Dalloway, as well as historical studies of various city venues such as Jean Moorcroft Wilson’s Virginia Woolf, Life and London: A Biography of Place (1997). This tradition was continued at the conference with the session Walking into History: Mapping London’s Past, which included David Bradshaw’s paper on the social context of the Embankment. Benjamin Harvey’s talk about “Woolf, Westminster, and Whitehall,” and Krystyna Colburn’s discussion of the historical associations in Hampstead (a version of which is included in this Miscellany) both were very much in the same tradition of mapping. Two studies of London statues presented by Diane Gillespie and Frances Spalding added an art historical dimension to rebuilding our knowledge of Woolf’s knowledge of London’s streets.

Many of these descriptive catalogues shade into the next category of city scholarship: thematic studies of the meaning of various urban allusions in Woolf’s works. Susan Squier’s Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City (1985) is a classic example of this kind of approach as is the growing body of scholarship on Woolf’s city essays: “Street Music,” (1905) “Street Haunting” (1926), the six essays that make up The London Scene (1931-1932), and the collection of youthful sketches recently edited by David Bradshaw, Carlyle’s House and Other Sketches. Thematic studies reach out beyond London to explore Woolf’s attitude towards other cities; at the New York conference there was, appropriately, a panel devoted to “From London to New York,” as well as papers exploring Woolf’s attitudes towards Paris, Florence, or Constantinople, including Melissa Wisner’s, published here. Also in this phase are the many comparisons of Woolf’s urban attitudes to those of other Modernist and contemporary artists such the 2009 conference papers exploring city references in the work of Woolf and Hope Mirrles, T. S. Eliot, Elizabeth Bowen, Hart Crane, Grace Paley, Zadie Smith, and Ian McEwan.

Thematic discussions of the meaning of the city in Woolf’s work often generate reflections on aspects of country life as well. Sometimes, as in Drew Shannon’s paper on the evolution of Woolf’s attitude towards London in her diary (included in this issue of the Miscellany), there is a direct contrast between the two. Other studies examine elements of the country or nature present in the city, a topic particularly frequent in discussions of flower imagery. In the present Miscellany, both Anne Collette’s comparison of Woolf and Eliot’s vision of Post-WWI London and Erin Douglas’s piece on “Floral Pleasures and Changeable Bodies in Virginia Woolf’s Orlando” and Jeanette Winterson’s The PowerBook” investigate the subject of flowers.

Beginning in the 1990’s, there was a critical explosion of work on Woolf and the city which inaugurated what I am calling a third phase in city scholarship: the theoretical. Rachel Bowlby’s 1992 essay, “Walking, Women and Writing: Virginia Woolf as flâneuse,” inaugurated this phase, generating a continuing strand of interest in looking a Woolf through the insights of Walter Benjamin. Jeri Johnson’s discussion of “Literary Geography: Joyce, Woolf, and the City” (2000) epitomizes this period, listing many of the theorists most frequently deployed when thinking about cities: Franco Moretti, Raymond Williams, Georg Simmel, David Harvey, and Jane Jacobs. Anna Snaith’s Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations (2000) and Andrew Thacker’s Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism (2003) represent additional germinal examples of how feminism, cultural studies, and space/place theory based on the work of Henri Lefevbre, Michel de Certeau, Edward Soja, and others can be combined to produce a theory of what anthropologist Clifford Geertz called “thick description” that embeds Woolf’s life and work in an increasingly broad range of historical contexts.

1 Bowlby’s essay was published in Still Crazy After All These Years: Women, Writing, and Psychoanalysis (NY: Routledge, 1992). Johnson’s article was originally published in City 4.2 (2000): 199-214. It is also reprinted in the very helpful The Blackwell City Reader, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).
This theoretical contextualizing was much in evidence at the New York Woolf conference in concurrent sessions on “Geographies of Mind,” “City Space as Creative Space,” and “Space and Orientation.” It also showed up in a number of sessions which looked at metropolitan sexualities such as “Queer City/Feminist Geography” and “Urban Genders.” Vara Neverow’s discussion of naked bathing in the Serpentine recovers a little-noticed feature of London’s sexual freedom for this Miscellany. The emphasis of contemporary geographical theory on the city being defined in terms of patterns of movement and relationship was also demonstrated in the demonstrated in several papers on public transport and movement through London via the Underground, omnibuses, and/or automobiles.

One of the highlights of the New York conference, Anna Snaith’s plenary on “The Years, Street Music and Acoustic Space,” provided an exemplary combination of all three moments of city scholarship. Recovering and documenting another material fact of city life—the music and noises of the street—Snaith showed how Woolf’s use of sound theory provided a corrective to her focus on the visual, investigating and articulating the role sound plays in creating spatial perceptions of the city. Her historical research on the debates about the legality of street music and the class and ethnicity of various neighborhoods showed how sound travels through time, and how the change in the meanings of sound is part of the thematic structure of Woolf’s novel. Perhaps next year’s conference on Woolf and nature will show us similar moments of integration, where fact, theme, and theory come together to enrich our understanding of still more aspects of her life and work.

Elisa Kay Sparks
Clemson University

MLA 2009 IN PHILADELPHIA
THE PANELS
Monday, 28 December
192. The Uses of Illness: Virginia Woolf and Medical Narrative
12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Philadelphia Marriott
Program arranged by the International Virginia Woolf Society
Presiding: David Eberly, Boston, MA
1. “‘A Sublime Complacency’: Religio Medici; or, Treating the Visionary’s Peril,” Rita Charon, Columbia Univ.
2. “Facing Illness: Rethinking Ethics from Virginia Woolf’s Bedside,” Michelle Ty, UC Berkeley
3. “Illness and Metaphor: Virginia Woolf’s Illness Experience and the Motive for Metaphor,” Marcia D. Childress, Univ. of Virginia

Wednesday, 30 December
688. Twenty-First-Century Woolf
12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Philadelphia Marriott
Program arranged by the International Virginia Woolf Society
Presiding: Elizabeth Outka, Univ. of Richmond
1. “‘Private Ancestor’ and Postmodern Publication: Jeanette Winterson’s Virginia Woolf,” Laura Morgan Green, Northeastern Univ.
2. “Girls, the Woman Writer, and Third-Wave Feminism in A Room of One’s Own,” Tracy Lemaster, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison
3. “Resistant Commemoration: Mrs. Dalloway as Precursor to Twenty-First-Century Memorials,” Jonathan Readey, Univ. of Virginia
4. “For There It Was’: Visions of a Sustainable City in Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway,” Patrick Nugent, Brooklyn Coll., City Univ. of New York

MLA Party: Alison Lewis has graciously offered her home as the site of the MLA Society Party! Date and directions TBA...

Many thanks to the International Virginia Woolf Society for its generous and continuing support of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany.
Virginia Woolf and the Natural World, the 20th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf, will be held at Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky, from June 3-6, 2010. Stay tuned for the call for papers and details on speakers and special events. Georgetown is just north of Lexington, about 60 miles east of Louisville, and 75 miles south of Cincinnati. The College looks forward to welcoming everyone to its campus, located on 104 acres of beautiful Kentucky bluegrass. Organizer: Kristin Czarnecki <Kristin_Czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu>

A complete call for papers along with additional conference information will be out shortly. We will consider all proposals but will be especially interested in those relating to the conference theme. Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- Flowers
- Gardens and Gardeners
- Parks
- Animals (animality, animal imagery, domestic animals, animal pet names)
- Rhythms of Nature
- Seascapes
- Landscapes
- Cornwall
- St. Ives
- Vacations
- Country Homes and Estates
- Farmers and Farming
- Hiking
- Sailing
- Hunting
- Prehistory
- Nature as Restorative
- Nature as Punitive
- City “versus” Nature
- Woolf and Ecology
- Woolf and the Environment
- Teaching Woolf and Nature

---

**THE LOUISVILLE CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND CULTURE SINCE 1900**

February 19-21, 2009

F-10: Virginia Woolf (Panel organized by Kristin Czarnecki, International Virginia Woolf Society)

Friday, February 20

3:15 - 4:45 p.m.

Room: 215

Chair: Suzette Henke, Univ. of Louisville

Beth Rigel Daugherty, Otterbein College, “Educating the Reader: Virginia Woolf’s Pedagogical Essays”

Brian Richardson, Univ. of Maryland, “The Physical Book and the Site of Reading in To the Lighthouse”

Theresa Mae Thompson, Valdosta State Univ., “Woolf and Gandhi: The Raj in Jacob’s Room”

---

**CONFERENCE COMMENTS**

University of Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900

February 19-21, 2009

Kristin Czarnecki organized the 2009 IVWS panel for the University of Louisville’s Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900, and approximately 30 people attended the 3:15 p.m. panel that Suzette Henke chaired on Friday, February 20th. Although the session had not been organized around a theme, one began to emerge as the speakers presented their papers.

Beth Rigel Daugherty, from Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio, discussed the essays in Woolf’s canon that focus on learning itself, particularly learning about reading and writing. In “Educating the Reader: Virginia Woolf’s Pedagogical Essays,” out of approximately 100 essays that could be called pedagogical, Beth focused on eight representative essays in which Woolf describes the paradoxical position of the teacher, reveals the complex nature of learning, outlines some overall pedagogical strategies, illustrates several specific teaching methods, and ultimately teaches the reader about teaching. Brian Richardson, of the University of Maryland at College Park, talked about “The Physical Book and the Site of Reading in To the Lighthouse,” and in doing so, focused on Mrs. Ramsay’s reading of “The Fisherman and His Wife” to James, a reading scene that most critics of To the Lighthouse feel obligated to “read.” Suggesting that dramas of misreading help construct modernism and its reader and summarizing Woolf’s use of reading as a trope in the novel, Brian proposed a reading of the tale/novel in which the males are insatiable and Mrs. Ramsay is the enchanted fish, though without supernatural powers. Finally, Theresa Mae Thompson, from Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, read Jacob’s Room through Gandhi in “Woolf and Gandhi: the Raj in Jacob’s Room,” arguing that Gandhi’s arguments “create a counterpoint for anti-empire and anti-violence motifs” in the novel.

By the time the session ended, then, the theme of reading had clearly emerged, and audience members asked good questions about the topic. Woolf’s words had succeeded once again in engendering words of our own...

**Beth Rigel Daugherty**

Otterbein College

---

**Did you know? Now you can keep up to date with the International Virginia Woolf Society on Facebook!**

Also, you really should check out the very informative and useful “Blogging Woolf” at [http://bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com/](http://bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com/) created by Paula Maggio.
This exhibit of Bloomsbury art, celebrating the centennial of its origins will include more than 100 paintings, numerous works on paper, and examples from the decorative arts and book arts. Organized by the Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University with the assistance of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, the exhibit will premier at the Nasher Museum and then travel to the Johnson Museum, the Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University, the Smith College Museum of Art, and the Palmer Museum of Art at Pennsylvania State University. The catalog, published by Cornell UP, is now available for $35 at <http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu>.

The anticipated dates for the exhibit are listed below.

**Vanessa Bell’s frontispiece for Kew Gardens (London: Hogarth Press, 1919).**

_Courtesy the Mortimer Rare Book Room, Smith College._

**Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University**

July 18 - October 18, 2009

**Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University**

January 15 - March 15, 2010

**Smith College Museum of Art**

April 1 - June 15, 2010

**Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University**

July 6 - September 26, 2010
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
Karen Levenback
<klevenback@worldnet.att.net>

EDITORS
Jeanne Dubino, Appalachian State University
<dubinoja@appstate.edu>
Mark Hussey, Pace University
<mhussey@pace.edu>
Vara Neverow, Southern Connecticut State University
<neverovv1@southernct.edu>
Merry Pawlowski, California State University-Bakersfield
<Merry_Pawlowski@firstclass1.csubak.edu>

REVIEW EDITOR
Karen Levenback
<klevenback@worldnet.att.net>

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Susan Wegener
<s.wegener@sbcglobal.net>

ASSOCIATE EDITOR & INDEXER
Susan Devoe, Southern Connecticut State University
<vwmindex@gmail.com>

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Jennifer A. Hudson, Southern Connecticut State University
<hudsonj1@southernct.edu>

Virginia Woolf Miscellany
GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS AND EDITORIAL POLICIES

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

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

Even when individual issues are themed, the Miscellany accepts submissions unrelated to the theme. Such submissions should be sent to the Managing Editor, Vara Neverow, at <neverovv1@southernct.edu> rather than to the Guest Editor.

Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words at maximum and shorter articles are strongly preferred. Articles should be submitted electronically, in .doc or .docx MS Word format and in compliance with current MLA style (see the 6th edition of the MLA Handbook).

The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and to correct errors. If time permits, contributors will be consulted about changes.

Contributors are responsible for obtaining permissions related to copyrights and reproductions of materials.

Contributors must provide the Editorial Board with original written documentation authorizing the publication of the materials.

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

The Editorial Board takes no responsibility for the views expressed in the contributions selected for publication. Submissions accepted for publication may be published in both hard and electronic copy.

The Miscellany backfile is currently available online in full text digital format through EBSCOhost’s Humanities International Complete and Literary Reference Center.

All rights revert to the author upon publication.

THE IVWS & VWS ARCHIVE INFORMATION
<http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/special/F51ivwoolfocietyfonds.htm>

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 E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University, University of Toronto, the archive of the VWS and the IVWS has a secure and permanent home. The archive is now officially housed in the collection.

All archival materials such as correspondence, memorabilia and photographs should be sent to the IVWS Historian-Bibliographer who will then arrange the transfer of materials. Contact information for current IVWS officers is on the IVWS website: <http://www.utoronto.ca/IVWS>
The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts is the most authoritative and up-to-date guide to Virginia Woolf’s artistic influences and associations.

In original, extensive and newly researched chapters by internationally recognised authors, the Companion explores Woolf’s ideas about creativity and the nature of art in the context of the recent ‘turn to the visual’ in modernist studies with its focus on visual technologies and the significance of material production. The in-depth chapters place Woolf’s work in relation to the most influential aesthetic theories and artistic practices, including Bloomsbury aesthetics, art and race, Vanessa Bell and painting, art galleries, theatre, music, dance, fashion, entertaining, garden and book design, broadcasting, film, and photography.

No previous book concerned with Woolf and the arts has been so wide ranging or has paid such close attention to both public and domestic art forms.

- An essential reference tool for all those working on or interested in Virginia Woolf, the arts, visual culture and modernist studies
- Provides a new intellectual framework for the exciting discoveries of the past decades
- Draws on archival and historical research into Virginia Woolf’s manuscripts and her Bloomsbury milieu
- Original chapters from expert contributors newly commissioned by Maggie Humm, widely known for her important work on Virginia Woolf and visual culture
- Combines broad synthesis and original reflection setting Woolf’s work in historical, cultural and artistic contexts

FORTHCOMING in 2010 from Edinburgh University Press

April 2010, 440 pages
52 black & white and 16 colour illustrations
Hardback, 978 0 7486 3552 8, £125.00/$175.00

Special price for readers of The Virginia Woolf Miscellany
£100.00/$140.00*

* To take advantage of this special offer please visit our website and download a copy of the flyer and order form: www.euppublishing.com/page/VirginiaWoolfandtheArts

www.euppublishing.com
ANNOUNCING the publication of

Woolf Editing/Editing Woolf:
Selected Papers of the Eighteenth Annual
Conference on Virginia Woolf,
edited by Eleanor McNees and Sara Veglahn
(Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2009),

Order forms for the print edition of this volume, as well as the Selected Papers from previous conferences 2003-2008 may be obtained at the following web address of The South Carolina Review themed series “Virginia Woolf International”:

<http://www.clemson.edu/caah/cedp/SCRThemed_Iss_VWoolf.htm>.

Contact Wayne Chapman <cwayne@clemson.edu> if you’d like to arrange by purchase order the acquisition of copies for your school library. Productions are presently underway to publish a Selected Papers for conference number 11 (University of Wales, 2001). Selected Papers 13, 15-18 are also available for viewing in read-only format at the website of the Center for Virginia Woolf Studies, California State University, Bakersfield.

Also, a selection of papers apart from the Palgrave anthology but assembled by the organizers of the 14th conference (University of London, 2004), as well as from the 12th conference (Sonoma State University, 2002) are posted on that site. Go to <http://www.csusb.edu/center> and click the Publications link for information about subscribing. Subscriptions are a bargain for the six volumes cached there (soon to be eight), not to mention Virginia Woolf’s Three Guineas notebooks, edited by Merry Pawlowski and Vara Neverow.

Woolf Studies Annual
Vol. 15, 2009
ISBN: 0-944473-93-8
May 2009, 238 pages
Price: $40.00

now available from Pace University Press.
To order go to: <http://www.pace.edu/page.cfm?doc_id=2575>

Coming Soon!
A Searchable Miscellany Index!

As part of an ongoing project to create a searchable Index to the Miscellany, Susan Devoe (SCSU) is currently completing an interim index that will be available shortly. The preliminary index is in the format of a table in MS Word listing every article published in the Miscellany from 1973 through 2009. In addition it lists the article’s author, publishing date, volume numbers and page numbers, along with five or more key words. It will be available on request (price to be determined) as a PDF document on a CD-ROM. Anyone interested in receiving this index or has questions about the index should contact Susan Devoe at <vwmindex@gmail.com>. 
# Table of Contents

**To the Readers**

*Elisa Kay Sparks*

- Streets and Flowers:  Woolf and the City/Country
  1

**Events and Announcements**

- MLA 2009 and CFP for 2011 Panel Proposals 2
- CFP for Louisville 2010 2
- CFP for the 20th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf in 2010 3
- Louisville 2009 Conference Panels 3
- Report on Louisville Conference Panel 3
- The IVWS is now on Facebook 3
- Check out “Blogging Woolf” created by Paula Maggio 3
- A Room of Their Own Exhibit 4
- A Brief Overview of Resources for Woolfians 4
- VWM Editorial Board 5
- The IVWS Archive 5
- VWM Book Review Editor 5
- VWM Guidelines for Submissions 5

**Recent Publications of Interest to Woolfians**

- The *Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts* edited by Maggie Humm 6
- Promotional: *Woolf Editing/Editing Woolf* 7
- Selected Papers from the 17th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf edited by Eleanor McNees and Sara Veglahn 7
- *Woolf Studies Annual 15* 7
- Announcement: Index to the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, Compiled by Susan Devoe (forthcoming) 7

**Special Issue on Country and City in Woolf Guest Editor, Elisa Kay Sparks**

- “Nailing a flag to a mast in a gale”: *Drew Patrick Shannon* 9
- Sex and the City: T. S. Eliot’s and Woolf’s Visions of Post-WWI London 10
- “That was a terrible thing to do to a flower”: *Erin Douglas* 13
- Floral Pleasures and Changeable Bodies in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* and Jeanette Winterson’s *The PowerBook* 16
- Geographies of Gender in *Jacob’s Room*: *Melissa Wisner* 16

**Special Issue Continued...**

- Virginia Woolf in Hampstead: *Krystyna Colburn* 18
- Familiar Not Intimate Spaces 18
- Sex, Suicide, and the Serpentine: *Vara Neverow* 19

**Miscellaneous**

- Woolf: Anti-Elegist (poem): *Judy Little* 23

**Book Reviews**

- Review: *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place* 
  Edited by Anna Snaith and Michael Whitworth 24
- Review: *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians* 
  By Steve Ellis 24
- Review: *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative 1900 to 1945* 
  By Mark Wollaeger 26
- Review: *Color, Space, and Creativity: Art and Ontology in Five British Writers* 
  By Jack Stewart 27
- Review: *Imagining Virginia Woolf: An Experiment in Critical Biography* 
  By Maria DiBattista 27
- Review: *Gifts, Markets and Economies of Desire in Virginia Woolf* 
  By Kathryn Simpson 28
- Review: *Trespassing Boundaries: Virginia Woolf’s Short Fiction* 
  Edited by Kathryn N. Benzel and Ruth Hoberman 30
- Errata 30
- How to Join the International Virginia Woolf Society 31
- How to Join the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain 31
- The Society Column *Georgia Johnston* 32


“Nailing a flag to a mast in a gale”: London and Writing in 
The Diary of Virginia Woolf

Let me begin with a sweeping and imperfect generalization: For Virginia Woolf, the grass was always greener. When she was in the city, she yearned for the quiet and solitude of the country. When she was in the country, she longed for “the tumult & riot & busyness” (D1: 9) of the city.

When I think of my favorite scenes in Woolf’s work, they are almost always urban: Mrs. Dalloway walking toward Bond Street. Big Ben chiming the hours, the leaden circles dissolving in the air. Orlando and Sasha skating on the frozen Thames. Elizabeth Dalloway and generations of Pargiters navigating the city streets. The wonderful intellectual gathering at Mary Datchet’s flat. A great many of us are enamored of the idea of Woolf as an urban animal, and the theme of the 19th Annual Woolf Conference indicated the extent to which Woolf is identified with London. In popular culture, Michael Cunningham’s 1998 novel The Hours and its 2002 film version reinforce the notion that Woolf saw London as tonic to her literary efforts, that she saw herself as withering in the suburbs, and that she required the stimuli of the city in order to create. In the film’s famous scene at a train station in Richmond, Woolf, played by Nicole Kidman, lays out her reasons for a return to London in a speech that culminates with, “[I]f it is a choice between Richmond and death, I choose death” (Hare 95). (Hermione Lee notes that this scene “played rather differently in the Richmond Odeon than anywhere else in Britain” [54].)

The line reads brilliantly as drama, but even a cursory glance at Woolf’s diary reveals that her relationship with the metropolis was more complicated than this. On 3 March 1926, she writes, “Nailing a flag to a mast in a gale, I have just compared writing a novel in London to that, in a letter to Vita” (D3: 64). The following, which is drawn from my work-in-progress The Deep Old Desk: The Diary of Virginia Woolf, will examine just a handful of the dozens of instances in Woolf’s diary in which she reveals that for all its joys, London was perhaps not the best place for her as a writer, and that she was able, not unlike James Joyce and his relationship with Dublin, to summon her most vivid portraits of the city when she saw it from a distance. Leonard Woolf worried about the effect of London’s many stimuli on Virginia’s delicate mental states, and she herself writes eloquently about her delight and irritation with what the city can provide or withhold. Her relationship with the city changes as she ages; the diary records an increased desire for anonymity and solitude as her fame grows, and with this comes the wish—a wish that Leonard will argue in favor of the suburbs and that she, having done feel pretty certain about & here confide it to my diary—we must leave her novel-in-progress on 19 June 1923, she should write: “[O]ne thing I put my mind to it, will win. Which she does. By January 1924, she and Leonard are living at 17 The Green, in Richmond, and she makes frequent visits to London to inspect lodgings. But London, for all its excitement, is not without its irritations: “As it is, an appeal to feel together is hopelessly muddied by intervening greatcoats & fur coats. I begin to loathe my kind, principally from looking at their faces in the tube. Really, raw red beef & silver herrings give me more pleasure to look upon” (D1: 5). And yet, a few days later: “I could wander about the dusky streets in Holborn & Bloomsbury for hours. The things one sees— & guesses at—the tumult & riot & busyness of it all—Crowded streets are the only places, too, that ever make me what-in-the-case of another-one-might call think” (D1: 9). The city thus always requires of Woolf a balancing act: she thrives on the bustle and is able to think there, but must always put up with the horrid faces of the people in the tube, the downsides of crowds and noise in the city.

When the diary resumes in 1917, it is markedly different from that kept in 1915. Commonly referred to as the Asheham diary, which is noticeably smaller (see head note [D1: 39]), this record of late summer of 1917 recounts in capsule form natural phenomena like weather, animals, insects, the perpetual hunt for mushrooms. Woolf was still in the process of recovering from her breakdown, and at first, the simplicity of the entries could strike the reader as being a tentative return to wholeness and writing. Thursday, 9 August: “To get mushrooms with Alix: L. stayed down sawing wood, as his foot was bad. Bunny over, & climbed the roof to see bees; didn’t take them: to be left till autumn” (D1: 41). That is the entirety of the entry. But upon her return to Richmond, which surely felt like the city after the quiet of Sussex, her entries resume their usual length and often delight in London and its streets: “London seems unchanged, making me think of the change there used to be when one was a child” (D1: 55).

By the mid-1920s, Woolf’s diary begins to reflect her boredom with the suburbs. Richmond is increasingly stultifying, and going to and from London to visit friends is a tiresome chore. (What I find rather funny about this is that central London is and was a short train ride from Richmond. If only Woolf knew how lucky she was, how many people these days would kill for such proximity to the city—but of course, the downside was that the trains stopped running in late evening, making getting home from parties in London a problem.) The novel she was writing, The Hours (soon to become Mrs. Dalloway), filled as it was on page after page with the thrill of the city, must have exacerbated her frustration. Is it a coincidence that two paragraphs below a description of her novel-in-progress on 19 June 1923, she should write: “[O]ne thing I do feel pretty certain about & here confide it to my diary—we must leave Richmond & set up in London” (D2: 249). There is an inevitability to this, and she herself can see that not only will the move itself be a hassle, but that Leonard will argue in favor of the suburbs and that she, having put her mind to it, will win. Which she does. By January 1924, she and Leonard are living in Tavistock Square, but in May of that year, she feels that the city, for all its glories, is a distraction. Watch her acknowledge this, and then fall into the distraction itself:

[I]t seems to me this diary may die of London, if I’m not careful.

London is enchanting. I step out upon a tawny coloured magic carpet, it seems, & get carried into beauty without raising a finger.
The nights are amazing, with all the white porticoes & broad silent avenues. And people pop in & out, lightly, divertingly like rabbits; & I look down Southampton Row, wet as a seal’s back or red & yellow with sunshine, & watch the omnibus going & coming, & hear the old crazy organs. (D2: 301)

And people did indeed “pop in & out”: the number of visitors the Woolfs receive in their London home is staggering. Many express admiration that Virginia Woolf could be so prolific in the face of her mental illness; I maintain that her output is astonishing given the number of guests she entertained. Only by maintaining the strictest of disciplines—writing in the morning, seeing guests only late in the day—could she accomplish anything.

While the Woolfs had numerous visitors in the country as well, it took—and still takes—some doing to reach Monks House in Rodmell. Unannounced visitors, while not unheard of, were less common there than in London, and Monks House sits at the end of Rodmell’s street, and the views from the back garden and Woolf’s writing lodge were—and are—stunning. She began to realize the ease and comfort of country living more and more with each passing year. The once-urbane Vanessa Bell had begun living almost exclusively at Charleston, and by 1930 Woolf says that Vanessa and Duncan Grant “think of London with dislike” (D3: 299). Virginia writes a few months later, after a particularly trying period in London, seeing numerous friends, “And I cry O Solitude—and look towards Rodmell” (D3: 332).

By 1933, the pendulum has shifted back almost completely, and Woolf longs for the country: “Talk of leaving London yesterday & moving the Press to Monks House; talk of buying a cottage in the North. We have plenty of money anyhow” (D4: 185). This is a far cry from the delight in the city she had shown ten years earlier. And yet the old pull is still there; London has not lost all its charm. June 1935:

I went on the roof with Andrews & saw all London—a magnificent metropolis so brushed up, so ornate, so continental & cosmopolitan at night in that quarter: there’s Oxford Street, ther’s Hyde Park, th’s new Lyons block of flats. And the West End squares; & oblongs of white light, & yellow light the faces, the rouged faces of offices & steeples & cranes; all very impressive very soigné (D4: 327)

The diary during these years illustrates Woolf’s increasing tendency to begin large projects only when she is assured of the solitude of Rodmell ahead of her: “At Rodmell I am going, seriously, to begin my book on fiction” (D3: 151). And she is happy to report in April 1933 that, “No, we didn’t see nobody at Rodmell” (D4: 151).

The war years necessitated the Woolfs’ permanent removal to the country. As she drafts Between the Acts, she writes almost constantly and powerfully in the diary about not only her country and its future in the face of Hitler’s onslaught, but the great city of London itself, strafed and bombed night after night. 10 September 1940: “The house about 30 yards from ours struck at one this morning by a bomb. Completely ruined. Another bomb in the square still unexploded. [...] Streets empty. Faces set & eyes bleared. In Chancery Lane I saw a man with a barrow of music & books. My typists office destroyed. Then at Wimbledon a Siren—people began running. We drove, through almost empty streets, as fast as possible” (D5: 316-17). It is perhaps fitting that the last image of London in her diary before her death in March 1941 is of emptiness and absence: “London streets are very empty—Oxford Street a wide grey ribbon.” And the city is no longer quite so pleasant: “My red purse & L[eonard] gave me another” (D5: 355). And she is back at Rodmell at the end of her life. In her last entry, there is a “curious sea side feeling in the air today. It reminds me of lodgings on a parade at Easter. Everyone leaning against the wind, nipped & silenced. All pulp removed. This windy corner. And Nessa is at Brighton, & I am imagining how it wd be if we could infuse souls” (D5: 359).

London was, for Virginia Woolf, one of the great loves of her life. But as with any lover, she spurned its charms when they no longer suited her, and fled for that other lover: the small house at the end of the street at Rodmell, and the desk overlooking the Ouse valley, with a board across her lap and a pen in her hand.

Drew Patrick Shannon
College of Mount St. Joseph

Works Cited

Sex and the City: Eliot and Woolf’s vision of Post-WWI London

Part I
In a letter to Roger Fry, written toward the end of November in 1918, Virginia Woolf notes the presence in her life of “that strange young man, Eliot” (L2: 95-6), of whom she had also remarked in her diary some few days earlier:

I was interrupted somewhere on this page by the arrival of Mr Eliot. Mr Eliot is well expressed by his name—a polished, cultivated, elegant American, talking so slow, that each word seems to have special finish allotted to it. [...] I think he believes in “living phrases” & their difference from dead ones; in writing with extreme care, in observing all syntax & grammar; & so making this new poetry flower on the stem of the oldest. (D1: 218-19)

Although Woolf’s attitude toward the man and his poetry is somewhat ambivalent, perhaps even cautious, her interest is sufficiently piqued to encourage a relationship and to consider the publication of his work by the Hogarth Press. In a diary entry dated Wednesday 19 March 1919, Virginia notes, “Today we finished printing Eliot’s poems—our best work so far by a long way, owing to the quality of the ink” (D1: 257). Woolf would appear to be more concerned with the appearance of the work than with its literary merit—of which she would seem to be in some doubt, introducing him a few months later to Violet Dickinson in tones characteristicly Woolfian: “Mr Eliot is an American of the highest culture, so that his writing is almost unintelligible” (L2: 355). It is difficult to discern quite what Woolf thought of Eliot’s poetry, but publication of his Poems (in tandem with the publication of her own Kew
**Gardens** in 1919) was followed (in 1923—the year “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street” was published) by the courageous decision to publish the poetic work that would revolutionise English-language poetry.

Lauded by some, and bemoaned by others, *The Waste Land* marked a change in poetry similar in effect to the publication of Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*—there could be no going back. The decision to publish Eliot’s work by the Hogarth Press (after initial magazine publication in Eliot’s *Criterion* and the *Dial* the previous year) suggests that despite a certain tentativeness that is uncharacteristic of Woolf, she was largely sympathetic. In October 1922, Virginia wrote to David Garnett in support of Eliot’s (now Tom’s) poem, “I expect you’re rather hard on Tom Eliots poem [*The Waste Land*]. I have only the sound of it in my ears, when he read it aloud; and have not yet tackled the sense. But I liked the sound” (L2: 57).

It is this sympathy in which I am particularly interested, a sympathy of imagery and feeling that I suggest marks Woolf’s own work, in particular, the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* whose composition might be said to form a sympathetic relationship with *The Waste Land*. Woolf and Eliot’s personal and literary relationship is marked by the aftermath of the First World War and the impact of a post-war modernity on the psychology and sexual relations of men and women. This impact is reflected in particular in a break with Nature (marked by a shift from a Wordsworthian Romanticism to what I will describe as a Modernist Romanticism).

**Part II**

*There was a time when meadow grove, and stream,*

*The earth, and every common sight,*

*To me did seem Appareled in celestial light[,]*—William Wordsworth, “Ode: Intimations on Immortality” I: 1-4

The difference between a Romantic and a Modernist Romantic perspective might be seen to lie in the degree to which, although both feel pain over the loss of physical and spiritual connection to Nature, the early nineteenth century Romantics believed that return to Eden, or the mending of the break between Humanity and Nature (and God) was possible. Wordsworth’s “Ode” alternates between lamentation for the lost Garden and joyous discovery of its persistence in the modern world:

> Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!  
> And let the young Lambs bound  
> As to the tabor’s sound!  
> We in thought will join your throng[,] (X: 1-4)

The early twentieth century Modernist Romantics had lost this vision; yet although they acknowledged return to the Garden was not possible, they could not let go of their desire for reunion. The result of this untenable position is a (self-conscious) nostalgia and a pre-eminent focus on memory in their work—memory that beguiles while it terrifies, untenable position is a (self-conscious) nostalgia and a pre-eminent focus on memory in their work—memory that beguiles while it terrifies, an emptiness, the vacancy of death; no vision and no redemption:

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
> And the dry stone no sound of water.  
> (“Burial of the Dead” 19-24)

The only flowering post-war is the revelation of what many would prefer remained hidden. The time of the hyacinth garden is passed—for “what branches can grow “out of this stony rubbish”?—and the sickly smell of lilac is a reminder of what we would prefer to forget. What is it that the modern men and women of Eliot’s London would prefer to forget? That the promise of love (of woman and of God) was a false promise? That love was a betrayal? That the gift of picked flowers, is a vestige of Eden lost to us and not to be regained? Even a year ago there is awareness of what we have lost:

> “You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;  
> “They called me the hyacinth girl.”  
> —Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,  
> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.  
> (“Burial of the Dead” 35-41)

Belatedness is the condition of modern humanity—“we came back late”—and even looking into the heart of light, no Word (of God) speaks to us; there is only darkness, there is only silence. This is unlike Wordsworth, whose “Ode” bravely attempts to repel or stave off the possibility of complete severance (from Nature and God): “And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves, / Forebode not any severing of our loves!” (XI 1-2). Eliot recognises it is too late; the flowers are cut and given in the pursuit of a Love that has, and probably most bleakly, had, no future. Interestingly, the recognition of loss is figured even in Wordsworth’s “Ode,” in the very midst of rejoicing in a connection (and a faith) recovered:

> Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call  
> Ye to each other make; I see  
> The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;  
> My heart is at your festival,  
> My head hath its coronal.  
> The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.  
> Oh evil day! if I were sullen  
> While Earth herself is adorning,  
> This sweet May-morning,  
> And the Children are culling  
> On every side,  
> In a thousand valleys far and wide,  
> Fresh flowers[,] (IV 1-13)
These flowers that might be read in terms of joyful connectedness to God and Nature are significantly “culled” by the children—a presentiment even here of inevitable separation from the beloved. This stanza ends with yet another about-face: having felt the joy of reconnection, the poet is suddenly struck down by grief and again a sense of loss. The tree and the field “speak of something that is gone”:

The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:   
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream? (IV 19-22)

Part III

For Woolf, cut flowers are the trace of nature in the city, and a nostalgic connection to a past that at times, in Mrs. Dalloway, feels quite similar to Wordsworth’s “glory and dream.” The story, “Mrs. Dalloway on Bond Street,” begins “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the gloves herself” (SF 152). The novel, Mrs. Dalloway, begins: “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (MD 3). Woolf’s substitution of flowers for gloves is meaningful, for (cut) flowers become the principal motif through which the central concerns of the novel are represented and revealed. Nostalgia associated with a childhood in the country is present in the short story, here already associated with flowers:

for Mrs. Dalloway June was fresh. A happy childhood[;][...]flowers at evening, smoke rising; the caw of rooks falling from ever so high, down down through the October air—there was nothing to take the place of childhood. (SF 152)

But this moment is not in fact completely happy, for the happiness of the present is only completed by memory of the past. Here we see how a moment in June in the city draws Mrs. Dalloway back into a past in which the future is presaged in the shift from flowers in June to the rooks falling in October: down down down. The memory of the summer of young adulthood is impinged upon by the autumn of Mrs. Dalloway’s age in the present; which toward the end of the story causes her to reflect upon change and the existential crisis of modernity:

It used, thought Clarissa, to be so simple. Down down through the air came the caw of the rooks. When Sylvia died, hundreds of years ago, the yew hedges looked so lovely with the diamond webs in the mist before early church. But if Dick were to die tomorrow, as for believing in God—no, she would let the children choose, but for herself, like Lady Bexborough, who opened the bazaar, they say, with the telegram in her hand—Roden, her favourite, killed—she would go on. But why, if one doesn’t believe! (SF 158)

The Edenic moment of connection “so lovely” between Nature, God and Humanity is lost in a past that feels to be “hundreds of years ago”—before the war, before “death had undone so many” (“The Burial of the Dead” 63).

“This late age of the world’s experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears,” muses Clarissa Dalloway as she walks through the streets of London in the novel that grew out of the story. “I love walking in London,” says Mrs. Dalloway. “Really, it’s better than walking in the country” (MD 6). But if Clarissa is in love with life, with London, with this moment in June in Mrs. Dalloway (MD 4), it is not an unalloyed love, but a momentary one—ephemeral: a love tinged by regret and a sense of all that has been lost. The re-appearance of Peter Walsh in the city, in her home and in her heart is a trigger for a flood of memories—memories of a garden:

But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would

have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking her heart the grief, the anguish. (MD 8)

The life that Clarissa makes with Richard in the city, as a result of this break with Peter, might be understood to be a life of expulsion from the garden, Clarissa herself being the cut flower—beautiful but rootless—ephemeral like the city she claims to love. The scene in Miss Pym’s flower shop is fascinating for its unmarked shift from present into past, from bunches and bowls of cut flowers to a summer evening in another time and place where flowers are earthed in their rightful place: “every flower seems to burn by itself, softly, purely in the misty beds” (MD 14). The “most exquisite moment of [Clarissa’s] whole life” occurs in that garden in the country, when passing a stone urn with flowers in it, “Sally stopped” and “kissed her on the lips” (38). Both Peter and Sally are foregone, and subsequently associated with a lost world. Cut flowers then are the sign of that disconnection. When Richard feels the need to tell Clarissa he loves he buys her a bunch of flowers—a gift that occurs to him after he reflects upon the past in Norfolk that is lost to him:

a soft warm wind blew back the petals; confused the waters; ruffled the flowering grasses. Haymakers, who had pitched beneath hedges to sleep away the morning toil, parted curtains of green blades; moved trembling globes of cow parsley to see the sky; the blue, the steadfast, the blazing summer sky. [...] Life had thrown up this wreckage; shop windows full of coloured paste, and one stood stark with the lethargy of the old, stiff with rigidity of the old, looking in. (MD 124)

Cut flowers are also a symbol of that rural idyll lost to the war—Richard thinks of “thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half-forgotten; it was a miracle. Here he was walking across London to say to Clarissa in so many words that he loved her” (126). But the idyll is also lost to the consumer culture of “coloured paste” in city shop windows. The modern relationship between men and women is less than it could be, less than it should be.

Similarly, but working from the opposite direction, the cut flowers given her by Hugh inspire Lady Bruton to think of her own rural past: “those fields down in Devonshire, where she had jumped the brooks on Patty, her pony, with Mortimer and Tom, her brothers. [...] [T]here were her father and mother on the lawn under the trees, with the tea-things out, and the beds of dahlias, the hollyhocks, the pampas grass” (122), of which the bunch of red carnations is the absurd remnant. In gratitude for Hugh’s services rendered, “Lady Bruton, who seldom did a graceful thing, stuffed all Hugh’s carnations into the front of her dress, and flinging her hands out called him ‘My Prime Minister!’” (121).

The humor that punctuates Woolf’s novel, even if it renders human beings at times absurd in their (misplaced) extravagance of feeling, might suggest that the loss of the Garden is not as grim as the loss represented in Eliot’s The Waste Land in which love is an abortion, “the nymphs are departed” and the “Sweet Thames” bears no testimony of lovers’ summer nights (“The Fire Sermon” 1-7). The river that might make fertile the wasteland of the city is stopped. For Eliot, even the traces of the promise cannot be discovered. The hyacinths were plucked and given a year ago; and it is doubtful if the corpse of the war dead will make fertile the wasteland of the city shop windows. The modern relationship between men and women is less than it could be, less than it should be.

The humor that punctuates Woolf’s novel, even if it renders human beings at times absurd in their (misplaced) extravagance of feeling, might suggest that the loss of the Garden is not as grim as the loss represented in Eliot’s The Waste Land in which love is an abortion, “the nymphs are departed” and the “Sweet Thames” bears no testimony of lovers’ summer nights (“The Fire Sermon” 1-7). The river that might make fertile the wasteland of the city is stopped. For Eliot, even the traces of the promise cannot be discovered. The hyacinths were plucked and given a year ago; and it is doubtful if the corpse of the war dead will bloom this year (“The Burial of the Dead” 71-73). So it would seem that if flowers are trace of that world lost to us, for Eliot, unlike Woolf, even their trace is lost.

But in saying this, perhaps I have not sufficiently acknowledged the dark stain of the war that utterly blights the love of Septimus and Rezia, and also blights the flowers with which they are connected:

Rezia came in, with her flowers, and walked across the room, and put the roses in a vase, upon which the sun struck directly, and it went laughing, leaping around the room.
She had to buy the roses, Rezia said, from a poor man in the street. But they were almost dead already, she said, arranging the roses.

So there was a man outside; Evans presumably; and the roses, which Rezia said were half dead, had been picked by him in the fields of Greece. (MD 102)

Cut flowers here are associated with death—the death of the beloved, the death of love; and the flowers themselves are “almost dead already.” Even the sign of love itself is half dead. So although the closing pages of Woolf’s novel return to Peter and Sally (ghosts of the past) waiting for (the ghost) of Clarissa to appear, and although the novel ends with Peter feeling “an extraordinary excitement” at Clarissa’s appearance, the novel is tinged with the knowledge of relationships (and of people) less than they might have been, of people damaged and people disconnected from others and from themselves. Perhaps Mrs. Dalloway is more sympathetic to The Waste Land than even I had thought. The artificial brightness of Woolf’s London is a mere flickering candle in a darkness that threatens to engulf us in “‘the contagion of the world’s slow stain.’”

Part IV
The poem that runs through the heart of the original “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street” is aptly Romantic. The lines are taken from Shelley’s requiem to Keats—a modern Adonais struck down before his time:

For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair
(“Adonais” III 6-9).

Yet some thirty-six stanzas later, Shelley refutes this darkness and despair with the admonition:

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life— (XXIX I-2).

But Keats is dead, and in the modern world bereft of God, there is no prospect of paradise regained, no Platonic ideal to which he might repair, no stanza to lift us out of despair. “The moderns had never written anything one wanted to read about death,” thinks Clarissa (SF 149), because the Romantic Modernists offer no false hope.

Anne Collett
University of Wollongong, Australia

Works Cited

“‘That was a terrible thing to do to a flower’"
Floral Pleasures and Changeable Bodies in Virginia Woolf’s Orlando and Jeanette Winterson’s The PowerBook

“I said my name again and again—‘ORLANDO! ORLANDO! I hoped my name would contain me, but the sound itself seemed to run off my tongue, and drop, letter by letter, into a pool by my feet.’” —Jeanette Winterson, The PowerBook (280)

“There are flowers, and then there are flowers: flowers, I mean, around which whole cultures have sprung up, flowers with an empire’s worth of history behind them, flowers whose form and color and scent, whose very genes carry reflections of people’s ideas and desires through time like great books.” —Michael Pollan, The Botany of Desire (77)

Flowers, geographical space, and the changing of bodies knit together Virginia Woolf’s Orlando and Jeanette Winterson’s The PowerBook. In both, connections among the tulip, bodily transformations, Constantiople, and Istanbul shape how bodies, pleasures, and sexualities are defined and experienced. Winterson’s The PowerBook dialogues with and recreates Woolf’s Orlando illustrating the continual significance of Woolf’s text. As Winterson notes:

Perhaps this is how it is—life flowing smoothly over memory and history, the past returning or not, depending on the tide...Goods, ideas, personalities, surface towards us, then sink away. Some we hook out, others we ignore, and as the pattern changes, so does the meaning. Time, which returns everything, changes everything. (Winterson 286)

Time returns the past and ideas, and what we find significant we “hook out.” This modernist interaction between time and space changes the ‘original’ pattern of the past offering us new patterns and new meanings. Orlando is an “idea, [and] personality” that “surfaces” in Winterson’s

1 Winterson 12.
2 A special ‘thank you’ to Dr. Madelyn Detloff, Dr. Susan Pelle, Jenise Bauman, and Dr. Elisa Sparks for commenting on drafts of this paper and helping to spark my intellectual curiosities both on and off the page.
The tulip is of particular relevance to the two works. Illustrating how this particular flower resists categorization, Susan Pelle defines “the tulip as a ‘queer’ little flower” (91). Woolf situates Orlando’s famous sex change in Constantinople, where this “‘queer’ little flower” changed the way nations view the floricultural industry in Turkey. While Winterson’s character Ali—her Orlando—is in Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, she picks a tulip to change into a boy. The tulip that transforms Ali directly connects to Orlando’s sexual transformation in Woolf’s novel as well as to the economic and political transformation of Istanbul and Turkey. Woolf notably uses representations of flowers to refigure bodies; as Jane Goldman suggests, “The flowers are like mouths with tongues of colour, which become reference points for snatches of conversations flitting around them” (113). For Woolf, flowers transform and in “Kew Gardens” they become body parts: “mouths” and “tongues” that can communicate “conversations” to the world (Goldman 112). Thus, flowers metaphorically change bodies, locations/cities, and bodies’ relations to cities and pleasures.

Woolf’s metaphorical flower, Orlando’s sex change, and Constantinople conceptualize bodies differently. Further, this flower as metaphor resists limiting pleasures to the mere heteronormative idea of the body. Sexuality, instead, becomes pleasures bodies can create. Goldman and Judith Roof discuss how Woolf uses flowers to represent lesbian sexuality. Goldman suggests that the “binding of violets may also connect [Rhoda] to Sappho” in The Waves (203). And Roof is one of many Woolf scholars who reads Woolf’s notable “match in the crocus” scene in Mrs. Dalloway as a representation of desire between Clarissa and Sally. Even Woolf herself, in her diary, connects a flower with Sapphism and Orlando: “I toyed vaguely with some thoughts of a flower whose petals fall; of all time telescoped into one lucid channel through wh. my heroine was to pass at will. The petals falling [...] (for this is all fantasy)[,...] Sapphism is to be suggested[,...] The Ladies are to have Constantinople in view[,...] I want to kick up my heels & be off” (D3: 131). Time becomes a “lucid channel” that Orlando can “pass at will” very similar to Winterson’s “tide” of time that she “hooks” Woolf’s Orlando out of (Winterson 286). As the “petals fall,” the “flower” opens and transforms into something new. Notably, the tulip is a flower whose “petals fall” unlike many flowers whose petals instead shrivel up. The transition of the flower and Orlando’s sex transformation become “one lucid channel,” adding a different element to Sapphic desire so that Orlando’s bodily transformation works against ideas/theories of sexuality that are confined by narrow conceptions and perceptions of bodies.

While Orlando is in Constantinople, he says that he “should feel a passion of affection for the bright, unseasonable flowers” (O 121). Orlando’s sex change occurs when he is “Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople” during the seventeenth century section of the faux biography, historically situated within the Tulip Era (O 118). Since Orlando exchanges goods between Constantinople and Britain and tulip bulbs were one of the most profitable and desired commodities, one could gather that Orlando buys “the queer ‘little’” (Pelle 91) tulip bulbs as “he had a finger in some of the most delicate negotiations between King Charles and the Turks—” (O 119). Interestingly, Britain’s first tulip bulbs were brought from Constantinople (Hall 5).

Flowers, specifically tulips and their “orgasmic” history, have transformative potential to change sexed bodies and explore sexualities via pleasure (Pollan 102). Winterson re-imagines Orlando as a tale of a flower that recreates a body and pleasure. Ali does not necessarily become a man with her/his tulip as Winterson does not fantastically graft a penis onto her character; rather, she gives Ali a different bodily vehicle to access and give pleasure, furthering the “orgasmic” potential of the tulip. The PowerBook draws from Orlando’s sex change and continual gender changeability, which cause Orlando’s “pleasures” to be “increased and his/her experiences multiplied” (O 220). Pleasure becomes different, greater, multiple, and far bigger. As Madelyn Detloff theorizes the queer possibilities of The PowerBook: “Winterson is an unquenchable, unapologetic writer who imagines new constellations of bodies and pleasures that have yet to emerge because they are not located in the past, but rather in the uncharted future” (152).

Orlando is “a flower whose petals fall,” a transformation symbolized by Ali’s own floral bodily transformation in Istanbul (DIII 131). A tulip remarks Ali’s body: “I found myself a well-formed fat stem supporting a good-sized red head with rounded tips....There are many legends of men being turned into beasts and women into trees, but none I think, till now, of a woman who becomes a man by means of a little horticultural grafting” (Winterson 12). This idea of “horticultural grafting” a body differently via a tulip is furthered by the floral characteristics of tulips, which are according to Michael Pollan, “great chandeliers, freely hybridizing [...] but also subject to mutations that produced spontaneous and wondrous changes in form and color. The tulip’s mutability was taken as a sign that nature cherished this flower above all others” (80). The tulip’s “mutability” and “changes in form” give it transformative potential in Winterson’s text. But Ali’s tulip is not purely phallic. As Roof suggests regarding Woolf’s crocus in Mrs. Dalloway: “A crocus is finally not a phallus—it’s petals peel back to reveal something other, a flame rather than a stick, radiance rather than solid unity, a transformation which renders the phallus itself invisible as either presence or absence” (109). Even when Ali uses the tulip to penetrate the Princess, the tulip does not become a penis or a traditionally defined

---

3 Pelle shows how The PowerBook shatters the connection of the vagina with flowers and offers a “queer space” where “‘queer’ little flower[s]” imagine sexed, raced, and national bodies, and in turn sexuality, differently (113).

4 Goldman notes a different moment in where Woolf, in her diary, talks about the transitory potential of flowers: “future shall somehow blossom out of the past. One incident—say the fall of the flower—might contain it”” (D3: 118 qtd in Goldman 187).

5 According to A. D. Hall, “The recognition of the tulip came curiously late in botanical history. The first European reference is contained in a letter written by

---

A. G. Busbequius in 1554 when he was traveling to Constantinople as Ambassador of the Emperor Ferdinand I to the Sultan” (5).

6 Pavord notes that tulips are always “re-inventing themselves in ways that we could never dream” (21). Tulips and flowers in Woolf’s Orlando and Winterson’s The PowerBook “re-invent” sexed bodies and pleasure in ways that we could never have imagined.

7 As Pollan references: “Tulipomania [...] for a brief ‘orgasmic interim’ (in words of the French historian Le Roy Ladurie), the stable order of society was turned on its head” (102).
phallic. The goal of the tulip is to pleasure both the Princess and Ali, which is not how penis pleasure is defined historically. In fact, Winterson goes as far to term Ali’s tulip bulbs “‘Key of Pleasure, and this one is Lover’s Dream’” (25). Importantly, sexual pleasure becomes more than merely reserved for the one doing the penetrating.

The “Key” to both The PowerBook and Orlando is “Pleasure” (Winterson 25). As The PowerBook continues, Ali anxiously wonders how s/he will “fuck” the Princess with her/his tulip (Winterson 26). Taking the lead, the Princess says:

“Take off your trousers and let me see you.”...“I have never seen a man before.” (You’re not seeing one now.) “The stories I have heard...the fleshiness, the swelling...but you are like a flower.” (This was true.) She touched my bulbs. “They are like chestnuts.” (Tulips, my darling, tulips.) (24-25).

The Princess is enthralled with the pretty flower that is not like the ugly “fleshiness, the swelling” that she expects. The Princess’s femininity, Ali’s masculinity, and their bodies access pleasure in new ways that are not contained by heteronormative ideas of sexuality, pleasure, sexed bodies, and genders. Ali does not expect her/his own pleasure and is astonished when the Princess: “kissed and petted my tulip, my own sensations grew exquisitive...as I felt my disguise come to life. The tulip began to stand up....There it was, making a bridge from my body to hers...Very gently the Princess lowered herself across my knees and I felt the firm red head and pale shaft plant itself in her body” (25-26). Queer masculine and feminine pleasures mingle as Ali feels “eagerness” and her/his pleasure causes the stem of the tulip to “bridge” her/his body to the Princess’s body (25-26). Ali’s body transforms again as the tulip actually comes alive to give and receive pleasure. Taking off from Woolf’s use of a flower as the channel for Orlando’s sexual transformation, pleasure in Orlando, and the location of Constantinople of Orlando’s sex change prior to its own transition to Istanbul, Winterson re-imagines Woolf’s ideas of pleasure and flowers transforming bodies and definitions of sexuality, performing her notion that “Time, which returns everything, changes everything” (286).

The narrator of Jeanette Winterson’s The PowerBook sits in her costume shop where she/he is surrounded by costumes and disguises that she/he rents and fictionally crafts. The novel chronicles the narrator creating cyber-stories that work as disguises, offering Tulip, her Internet love and her/his pleasure causes the stem of the tulip to “bridge” her/his body to the Princess’s body (25-26). Ali’s body transforms again as the tulip actually comes alive to give and receive pleasure. Taking off from Woolf’s use of a flower as the channel for Orlando’s sexual transformation, pleasure in Orlando, and the location of Constantinople of Orlando’s sex change prior to its own transition to Istanbul, Winterson re-imagines Woolf’s ideas of pleasure and flowers transforming bodies and definitions of sexuality, performing her notion that “Time, which returns everything, changes everything” (286).

The narrator of Jeanette Winterson’s The PowerBook sits in her costume shop where she/he is surrounded by costumes and disguises that she/ he rents and fictionally crafts. The novel chronicles the narrator creating cyber-stories that work as disguises, offering Tulip, her Internet love interest, “freedom for just one night” (Winterson 3). The narrator then creates herself as the character Ali as she writes her story “Open Hard Drive” to Tulip (Winterson 7, 29). After reading the story, Tulip messages the narrator, “That was a terrible thing to do to a flower,” and an Internet chat follows: “‘When you came on-line you said you wanted ‘A Miracle of Discretion’ and ‘Lovermaking Unbelievable: Indiscretions Incredible.’” Virginia Woolf: Lesbian Readings. Ed. Eileen Barrett and Patricia Cramer. NY: New York UP, 1997. 180-202.


offering “freedom for one night” (Winterson 3) that defies biological determinism. What a fabulous thing to do with a flower....

Flowers both metaphorically and literally change cities, bodies, and pleasures from stable and concrete to insatiable and changeable. The convergence of flowers with time and bodies alters the idea of location and place. Time changes Constantinople in Woolf’s novel to Istanbul in Winterson’s novel. Winterson shifts locations yet again when Ali and the Princess’s story move from Istanbul into an Internet space set in a narrative with a character by the name of Tulip. The dynamic movement between both texts suggests that the definitions of locations and spaces—just like bodies—are transitory. The exchange of tulips and movements of bodies that transform pleasures also transform cities and their global relations. Winterson and Woolf refigure bodies with flowers to create new worlds, futures, and pasts that continue to re-shape our presents and offer us different fantasized worlds where tulips, and flowers are grafted to play with gender, sexed bodies, desire, and pleasures in revolutionary ways.
The characteristics of Artemis indicate strongly that she exists outside the patriarcal society in which they live. Woolf constructs a fictitious seaside vantage point for Betty in the form of Dods Hill, a central structure in the town of Scarborough, where Betty lives as town matriarch embodying freedom of expression and sexuality. In turn, Woolf positions Jacob at the Acropolis in Athens, where all manner of intellectual and physical satisfactions elude him. Using these spaces as gendered geographies, Woolf establishes an alternative model to validate the history and knowledge of women and the pivotal role they play in any culture. In Jacob's Room, the Acropolis epitomizes patriarchal traditions such as the exclusion of women from Cambridge to study Greek and their lack of freedom to travel to Athens independently. However, Woolf develops Dods Hill as an equally historical sacred space encapsulating centuries of female knowledge and tradition linked to classical Greek society.

The descriptions of Dods Hill and the Acropolis are strikingly similar. Woolf writes, “Dods Hill dominated [...]. No words can exaggerate the importance of [it]. [...]. It was the earth; the world against the sky [...]. The progress of the sun was measured by it; the tint of the day laid against it to be judged” (JR 17). Crowned by the remnants of a Roman fortress, Dods Hill has a “magnificent view—moors behind, sea in front, and the whole of Scarborough laid out flat like a puzzle” (JR 17). Woolf describes the Acropolis, as having an equally strategic vantage point; it “Surges into the air, raises itself above the town […] to be seen all hours of the day” (JR 148). In both descriptions, Woolf alludes to a sense of time and the day passing over the two spaces providing a sense of continuity and daily ritual. The Acropolis stands with “extreme definiteness” and imposing “ideas of durability” (JR 148) which resembles the rigidity and imposing presence of the patriarchy suppressing women’s independence. The Acropolis rising above Athens mirrors the projection of Dods Hill above Scarborough—although Woolf describes the Acropolis as an “emergence through the earth” (JR 148), whereas Dods Hill “was the earth” (JR 17). This distinction suggests that Dods Hill has a primacy over the Acropolis, a presence that pre-dates the Acropolis. These two spaces also echo each other through the repeated image of women’s domestic work. Betty sits atop Dods Hill sewing and calling to her children when it is time to go home, and the women at the Acropolis do the same as they “roll up the black stockings which they use as tea” around her. Betty stays focused on her thoughts and the Acropolis do the same as they “roll up the black stockings which they are knitting in the shadow of the columns, call to the children, and troop off down the hill back to their houses” (JR 148). Woolf’s description of the women knitting on the foothills of the Acropolis establishes an historical Greek lineage to the women on Dods Hill, including Betty Flanders.

Woolf further extends the connection between the ancient Greco-Roman world of Athens and Scarborough by using the female residents of Dods Hill in the role of Greek chorus. It is the rhythm of their day and the methodical attention paid to domestic chores such as feeding the chickens and beating the carpets that punctuate the activities of Dods Hill. When Betty walks with her children, the women of the town stop beating the carpets to observe and say, “Now she’s going up the hill with little John” (JR 17). The chorus is repeated again at the onset of World War I, when Betty is woken by the dulled sound of guns but dismisses it as “as if nocturnal women were beating great carpets” (JR 175).

The ancient Greco-Roman world is also evoked through the similarities Betty Flanders shares with several Greek goddesses, most notably Artemis, the virgin goddess of the moon. Vana Neverow explains, “The characteristics of Artemis indicate strongly that she exists outside the patriarchal definition of womanhood” (211). Betty mirrors these “rebel” traits in her role as sole protector and provider to her young boys and in her refusal to remarry and alter her lifestyle on Dods Hill. Neverow also explains that to protect herself from male assault, “Artemis ‘always carried her own quiver,’ hanging it by the door to her dwelling’ so that ‘it would seem to all […] that there was a man there with her’” (Nor Hall, The Moon and the Virgin, qtd in Neverow 212). This could explain a possible dynamic of the platonic relationship Betty keeps with war-maimed Captain Barfoot. While there is debate about the exact nature of this relationship, Betty may be content with the town’s knowledge of the company she keeps with Barfoot because it prevents additional suitors from coming forward, and Barfoot’s lameness may symbolize the limited range of activities between them.

Scarborough and Athens serve as the location of Betty and Jacob’s creative and emotional activities, and Woolf develops additional intriguing contrasts between them through the subtle introduction of a third city—Constantinople. The references to Constantinople in Jacob’s Room derive their significance from Woolf’s feelings for the foreignness of the city. Urmila Seshagiri notes that Woolf’s diary entries about Constantinople record the impression, “that here you realized that life was not lived after the European pattern[...][and] you knew yourself to be the spectator of a vigorous drama” (58). The feeling Woolf had of Constantinople existing outside the European pattern, or outside a traditional patriarchy, helps her see it as a place of possibilities for women. In To the Lighthouse, for example, she describes how Nancy, while holding Minta’s hand, sees “the whole world spread out before her as if it were Constantinople seen through a mist” (TTL 64), an experience that allows anything to be possible (“the whole world”) and to be shaped in a form of her choosing (mist is not a concrete form, but rather is somehow exquisitely dreamlike and malleable).

The parallel between Betty and Jacob’s creative activities begins atop their attributed spaces with a comparison between the domestic art of sewing and the scholarly arts of reading and writing. While sewing may not seem on par with the traditionally male-privileged intellectual tasks, Rowena Fowler believes that Woolf, “often used images of sewing for women’s alternative modes of creativity” (223). Additionally, Sayaka Okumura writes: “The imagery of knitting and similar activities has been intimately related to femininity [...] writing on the other hand has been associated with masculinity [...] [but] this traditional dichotomy is blurred by Woolf’s aesthetic” (166). Betty sits at the top of Dods Hill patching Jacob’s breeches. Despite the challenges of attending to three young boys, Betty remains focused, “only looking up as she sucked the end of her cotton” (JR 17). Even as her youngest son John places grasses called “tea” around her. Betty stays focused on her thoughts and her tasks. Betty’s creative expression atop Dods Hill is successful, and Woolf uses evocative, positive imagery of Constantinople to paint the scene below: “the whole city was pink and gold; domed; mist-wreathed; resonant” (JR 17).

The description of Dods Hill as pink and gold domed gives it a feminine mystique, reinforcing it as a creative, emotive space that houses the wisdom of the females who live there. The female wisdom of Dods Hill includes “profusion, mother wit, old wives’ tales [...] moments of astonishing daring, humour, and sentimentality” (11). The reference to the domes is most likely an evocation of Santa Sophia in Constantinople. The Greek translation of Santa Sophia is Holy Wisdom, and Sophia is always in the feminine case in Greek. This passage, although brief, is rich with imagery of Constantinople. David Roessel explains why even a brief reference is significant:

[Constantinople] was a multivalent symbol encompassing three of the most significant forces in [Woolf’s] life, Sapphic love, death and war [...] and while Constantinople occurs with some frequency in Woolf’s writing, the appearances are generally brief and without explanation[...]. Only when the pieces are put together does the full significance of the city in the geography of Woolf’s ideas become clear. (398)
If we are to interpret Constantinople as a geography of ideas in Woolf’s writing, then this scene with Betty sewing atop Dods Hill is illustrative of Woolf’s ideal of a woman’s autonomy: freedom of expression and the choice to live life as desired.

Jacob’s creative experiences take place at the Acropolis, but these visits are not successful or rewarding. Sitting at the Acropolis trying to read, Jacob is, “Composed, commanding, contemptuous, a little melancholy, and bored” (JR 175). He attempts to read and write, but does so one page at a time, then “puts his thumb in the book” or starts to write but stops to “draw [Sandra’s] straight nose” (JR 150). During one visit in particular, Jacob is distracted and blames it on a group of women on their way to Constantinople exclaiming, “Damn these women[], […] How they spoil things” (JR 151). The narrator explains that Jacob says this “without any trace of bitterness, but rather with sadness and disappointment that what might have been should never be” (JR 151). The clarification makes the comparison of the two scenes poignant as Betty leaves the top of Dods Hill feeling satisfied with her thoughts and completion of her tasks, but Jacob leaves the Acropolis with a sense of “violent disillusionment” (JR 151) and does not complete his essay on the history of democracy. In this scene, Constantinople is a bother to Jacob. The presence of women at the Acropolis on their way to Constantinople interrupts his attempts at study. His response to their presence at the Acropolis is similar to his reaction concerning women attending ceremonies at King’s College Chapel at Cambridge, “Why allow women to take part in it?” (JR 32). Jacob sees Constantinople as a challenge into the symbols of patriarchy, whereas is the source of inspiration and satisfaction for Betty.

In yet another point of comparison, Dods Hill and the Acropolis also serve as the backdrops for Betty’s and Jacob’s intimate encounters in the novel. While the depiction of these encounters is not explicitly sexual, the pivotal nature of these experiences illustrates each character’s ability, or inability, to articulate their desires and express their creativity. Mrs. Jarvis and Betty’s aspiration is the smooth circles of the Roman camp atop Dods Hill. The smooth circles of the hill are frequented territory for them: “How many needles Betty Flanders had lost there! and her garnet brooch” (JR 132). This scene depicts a sensual and intimate moment between two women in the moonlight who are developing a strong emotional connection. Betty rubbing her toe into the earth is a clear sensual image and one of informality between the two women. The language used to describe their encounter is calm and accepting. In contrast to the smooth circles where Betty and Mrs. Jarvis sit, Jacob and Sandra’s intimate encounter is on the “jagged mound” (JR 159) of the Acropolis. From Dods Hill, “The lights of Scarborough flashed, as if a woman wearing a diamond necklace” (JR 132), but in Athens, “the front of the [Acropolis] was cadaverous from electric light” (JR 159-160). The difference between these two descriptions is startling. The image of a woman wearing a diamond necklace is sensual and elegant, whereas the cadaverous light is ominous and foreboding. Light bouncing off a diamond necklace has angles and dimensions, but cadaverous light signifies the swallowing up of possibilities. Another contrast in the two encounters occurs in the descriptions of the wind. On Dods Hill, “It was so calm. There was no wind” (JR 132), but at the Acropolis, “the wind scour[s] the sand […] and sows itself thick with dry particles. And then it pelts the smooth domes of the mosques” (JR 160). The calm air on Dods Hill indicates an acceptance of the surroundings and an environment in balance. The image of the wind scouring the Acropolis is chaotic and destructive in its attempts to pelt the smooth domes symbolizing women’s knowledge (Santa Sophia) and their space alongside the pinnacles and spires.

The two encounters evoke different images of Constantinople. From Betty’s place on Dods Hill, Constantinople is the “emotive female presence” (250) Krystyna Colburn refers to, beautifully revealed through a mist. From Jacob’s vantage point at the Acropolis, Constantinople is a storm of wind and dust that bombards the sacred domes, shakes the landscape, and wakes the dead. The intimate encounters further contrast because Betty and Mrs. Jarvis easily open the orchard gate and walk up Dods Hill beneath clear moonlight to the “smooth circles” of the Roman camp, whereas Jacob and Sandra are almost breaking and entering into the Acropolis under an obscured moon in an attempt to reach the “jagged mound” (see also Neverow 226). After their intimate experience, Sandra asks herself “What for?” (JR 161) calling into question the validity of the emotion and expression between her and Jacob, which contrasts to the acceptance Betty and Mrs. Jarvis experience on Dods Hill.

The geographically based parallel between Scarborough and Athens, informed by Woolf’s travels to Greece and Constantinople as well as her studies in Greek, is intriguing and illustrates her feminist thought, social ideals and her emotionally layered connection to these cities. Woolf’s use of ancient Greco-Roman elements and her references to the city of Constantinople in Jacob’s Room help define Dods Hill as sacred female space. By proposing a physical parallel between Dods Hill and the Acropolis, a symbolic relationship emerges that pays homage to Greek goddesses and matriarchal societies. The pink and gold domes metaphorically shielding the women and space of Scarborough correlates to Woolf’s efforts to preserve and convey the body of female wisdom and creativity that suffered perennial risk from a patriarchal power structure. On Dods Hill the domes are not scoured by the wind or pelted by stones—they are accepted and at peace.

Melissa Wisner
Yale University

Works Cited
Virginia Woolf in Hampstead: Familiar Not Intimate Spaces

A sense of exterior space in Virginia Woolf’s writing is at its most intimate when either central London or the southern shoreline of Sussex is evoked. Mrs. Dalloway’s walk through Westminster vibrates with expectancy and life. The transitory joy of St. Ives palpates with a haunting sense of childhood’s fleeting days and the losses of earlier times. Other parts of London and England fare less well, less intensely, although Virginia knew them well and incorporated their familiarity into her writing. Hampstead is one of these parts of London that her readers know less well, although Virginia herself often visited women there who made lasting marks on her consciousness. She incorporated her knowledge of women social reformers and a Hampstead social experiment into her writing in a way that unfortunately usually goes unnoticed and unknown to her readers.

Woolf would have approached Hampstead via the 1907 Tube station (fig. 1) and walked from there to her friends’ homes.

As a young adult she visited Margaret Llewelyn Davies and Lilian Harris, lesbian partners in life and in work in the Women’s Cooperative Guild. Their first home was in Church Road, very near the station. The two women later moved to Well Walk, nearby. Virginia visited them at both homes, both before and after marriage to Leonard. From the two women she would have learned about the Guild, about its work and its nearly Paolo Frierian intent for women to support themselves rather than be dependent on charity. In 1909, Woolf wrote of a conversation among Davies, Janet Case, and her sister that she was struck by their conviction that justice ought to be done to the whole of womankind. (Woolf, “Hampstead” 11).

Davies and Harris’s Well Walk home at number 26 (fig. 2) was very near the monument to Susanna Noel (fig. 3) who had left land to be leased for homes in Hampstead.

The proceeds were to be benefit the poor of Hampstead. There is some irony in the fact that the leaseholds of many of today’s wealthy Hampstead residents finance public housing in their midst. Each time Virginia visited, she was in sight of that very monument as well as some of the housing for the poor.

Janet Case and her sister lived nearby on Windmill Lane at number 5. Virginia wrote, again in that 1909 entry, that “Hampstead is always refreshing. Even on a muddy night there is still some charm; it is so small and quiet[,] […] the Misses Case live on a ridge of the hill, and have a view beneath them on a fine day.” She continued to visit here for many years until Janet, her old Greek teacher, died.

Within the fiction of Woolf, though, there is a stranger and more problematic intersection: Hampstead and Jacob’s Room. Casually dropped references to the area appear sporadically but have touchstones to meaningful points of her life. When Mr. Floyd returns to Hampstead and feeds the ducks by the Leg of Mutton Pond at a far end of the heath, he is close to the area where Lytton Strachey lived for a time. And it seems innocuous that Fanny Elmer notices children stooping to launch little boats all around the pond, but their nurses snatching them back in fright is unrealistic given the fact that it is a wading pond and very shallow. Children still launch their boats there, without fear from their guardians. Woolf’s own reference may include children launching boats from a similar pond in her childhood in Kensington.

In Chapter 10 of Jacob’s Room, there may be the beginning of a more important inaccurate reference. The narrator, in Hampstead, notes the roofs of Hampstead Garden Suburb. At the time the novel was written, this would have been more than a casual reference. Hampstead Garden Suburb is not even in Hampstead (postal area NW3). It is rather in NW11, seemingly unimportant, but a real difference in terms of class distinctions. Hampstead Gardens is in fact, the brainchild and long-term project of one very stubborn woman, Henrietta Barnett. From the early 1900’s until 1911 when it opened, it was lauded, derided, and ridiculed in the streets and in the press. Contemporary readers of Jacob’s Room would have had to know of it—and to know that Barnett finally succeeded. This was a mixed income, mixed social strata, mixed household style of housing—a socially integrated suburban community.

Henrietta raised the money, purchased 250 acres to create a heath extension and an additional 250 acres for the community building. Besides financing the houses, she hired the architect, oversaw the construction, and opened the first homes. Building on her earlier

---

1 Guest Editor’s note: The Lancet in July 1886 reported that about two feet of duck droppings were dug out of Round Pond in Kensington Gardens (138), which suggests another reason for keeping children out of shallow water.
work with prostitutes from Whitechapel, Barnett included social and recreational facilities: quadrangle type developments for widows and single working women, with airy common rooms and shared cooking facilities, as well as homes for the affluent and for working class families. Nevertheless the work was called specious and vulgar, and the movement was seen as undesirable. It mixed classes, it made sure that working women could remain independent, and it brought in “undesirable” elements of society. Some grumbled that the working classes couldn’t even be trusted to tend to their gardens. (Creedon 138). But Henrietta had worked with Octavia Hill and knew how not to give in. What would now be interpreted as resolve and self-assertion was then seen as Henrietta’s unfeminine arrogance and aggression.

But she succeeded.

And Woolf could not have missed it. It was front (or, in those days, back) page news for months. But yet she wrote: “Fanny Elmer sighed, as she sat on a bench in Judges Walk, looking at Hampstead Garden Suburb” (JR 92). Impossible. Judges Walk is at the end of the Windmill Lane, where the Case sisters lived. And the “suburb” is miles away. For two years in a row I have gone to that spot to try to see what Fanny saw...and it is still impossible. So Woolf wasn’t laying a scene—she was laying a social commentary, an awareness of a woman’s social project bought to fruition. And what has become of this “home for all” movement? Sparse public transportation and a hunger for suburbia, and a craving to be part of Hampstead’s aura have changed the Garden Suburb. In 2008 a member of the board and a young homeowner there confirmed it. And visually it is clear as well. The homes now cost in the millions (fig. 4), way beyond the means of the working class.

And the cases of the Serpentine? The lake (also known as the river), created in 1730, curves westward through Hyde Park into Kensington Gardens where it becomes the Long Water. However, the artificial lake in Hyde Park, many of Woolf’s initial references to the Serpentine itself in her earliest diaries are relatively neutral. Young Virginia, for example, writes on 14 May 1897: “Father & I went out together. When we arrived at the Serpentine we lazily sat down in 2 arm chairs; and lolled there for half an hour watching the river, & the peacocks on the other banks” (P4 85; see also 15; 22; 96; 97; 107). In her later personal writing, she also occasionally mentions the Serpentine in a similarly matter-of-fact fashion—she writes, for instance, on 15 October 1934: “Walked with L. all around Serpentine and Kensington Gardens yesterday” (D4: 252).

1 The lake (also known as the river), created in 1730, curves westward through Hyde Park into Kensington Gardens where it becomes the Long Water.
2 Many of Woolf’s initial references to the Serpentine itself in her earliest diaries are relatively neutral. Young Virginia, for example, writes on 14 May 1897: “Father & I went out together. When we arrived at the Serpentine we lazily sat down in 2 arm chairs; and lolled there for half an hour watching the river, & the peacocks on the other banks” (P4 85; see also 15; 22; 96; 97; 107). In her later personal writing, she also occasionally mentions the Serpentine in a similarly matter-of-fact fashion—she writes, for instance, on 15 October 1934: “Walked with L. all around Serpentine and Kensington Gardens yesterday” (D4: 252).
3 As Mitchell Leaska notes, the entry is probably based on a column in the Evening News and Evening Mail on 23 September 1903 (P4 211 n60). Of course, at this point, Virginia had already lost her mother and knew that her father was suffering from untreatable cancer, dying in February 1904. The year of his death, Virginia wrote to Violet Dickinson, anxious about her potentially terminal illness, mentioning that “one’s” death is emotionally fraught for her. The suicide note, which begins “No father, no mother, no work,” is so piteous that it triggers Virginia’s extended reflection on the causes of the woman’s deep depression and how devastating it is to lose one’s parents (Passionate Apprentice 211-13). Nine years later, working on The Voyage Out, Virginia writes to Violet Dickinson, anxious about her potentially negative reaction to the novel: “you won’t like it; you’ll tell me I’m a failure as a writer, as well as a failure as a woman. Then I shall take a dive into the Serpentine which, I see, is 6 feet deep in malodorous mud.” Immediately following her mischievous threat, Virginia pens the query, “Are you fond of me?” (L1: 499), invoking her Sapphic relationship to Dickinson (see, for example, Liliendiffeld) and perhaps her surrogate role as the daughterly object of Violet’s maternal care. Woolf comments in “Not One of Us,” a review of Walter Edwin Peck’s 1927 biography of Shelley, on yet another Serpentine suicide, that of Shelley’s first wife, writing of how “contact with Shelley turned Harriet Westbrook, who

works to be safe and welcoming for everyone to walk and ramble. The Heath itself, many of Woolf’s initial references to the Serpentine itself in her earliest diaries are relatively neutral. Young Virginia, for example, writes on 14 May 1897: “Father & I went out together. When we arrived at the Serpentine we lazily sat down in 2 arm chairs; and lolled there for half an hour watching the river, & the peacocks on the other banks” (P4 85; see also 15; 22; 96; 97; 107). In her later personal writing, she also occasionally mentions the Serpentine in a similarly matter-of-fact fashion—she writes, for instance, on 15 October 1934: “Walked with L. all around Serpentine and Kensington Gardens yesterday” (D4: 252).

Virginia Woolf mentions the Serpentine, the artificial lake in Hyde Park, London in a variety of contexts in her writing. A significant number of these references are associated either with death—particularly suicide—or transgressive sexuality, or occasionally both. Similarly, there are also intriguing instances when Woolf uses the word “serpentine” itself as an adjective with similarly transgressive resonances.

The first reference to the Serpentine’s transgressive aspect occurs in 1903. Virginia Stephen, in a writing exercise, muses on a nameless woman in her mid-forties who has drowned herself in the Serpentine. Virginia notes that, even though such events are quite common, this particular death is emotionally fraught for her. The suicide note, which begins “No father, no mother, no work,” is so piteous that it triggers Virginia’s extended reflection on the causes of the woman’s deep depression and how devastating it is to lose one’s parents (Passionate Apprentice 211-13). Nine years later, working on The Voyage Out, Virginia writes to Violet Dickinson, anxious about her potentially negative reaction to the novel: “you won’t like it; you’ll tell me I’m a failure as a writer, as well as a failure as a woman. Then I shall take a dive into the Serpentine which, I see, is 6 feet deep in malodorous mud.” Immediately following her mischievous threat, Virginia pens the query, “Are you fond of me?” (L1: 499), invoking her Sapphic relationship to Dickinson (see, for example, Liliendiffeld) and perhaps her surrogate role as the daughterly object of Violet’s maternal care. Woolf comments in “Not One of Us,” a review of Walter Edwin Peck’s 1927 biography of Shelley, on yet another Serpentine suicide, that of Shelley’s first wife, writing of how “contact with Shelley turned Harriet Westbrook, who

Barnett’s dream, Woolf’s pointed acknowledgement of women’s power to change society, has been gentrified into another affluent London suburb.

So perhaps it is good that from Judges Walk, from the Hampstead Virginia knew, Hampstead Garden Suburb is invisible. The Heath itself, the streets of Hampstead on Susanna’s leaseholds, are the places where the classes meet. There are the accessible streets and the paths where it is safe and welcoming for everyone to walk and ramble.

Krystyna Colburn
Independent Scholar
should have been the happy mother of a commonplace family, into a muddled and bewildered woman, who wanted both to reform the world and yet to possess a coach and bonnets, and was finally drawn from the Serpentine on a winter’s morning, drowned in her despair” (*Death of the Moth* 122-23).

The letter to Violet, a woman to whom Virginia had been attracted for years, clearly links two aspects of the Serpentine Woolf addresses elsewhere—the motifs of suicide and homosexual attraction, both of which, of course, were considered socially deviant at the time. In Woolf’s fiction instances of illicit sexual desire often transpire in liminal spaces, one of these being the Serpentine. These places include waterways, parks and gardens, which permit a range of encounters, including the mingling of classes in a socially hierarchical culture. Such locations are typically positioned between the natural and artificially constructed worlds and mutate from public/open places into private/clandestine places during the transgressive moments of intimacy. Familiar in some detail with the homosexual lifestyles of her friends such as Lytton Strachey, Duncan Grant, and Maynard Keynes, Woolf was fully aware that there were, for men, places where such transgressive desires could be fulfilled—for example, male homosexual encounters could readily be conducted in public urinals. She was also conscious that there were few such sexual opportunities (or even such public conveniences!) for women. Hermione Lee observes that Virginia Stephen had only very limited access to Sapphic sexual satisfaction since “there was no acceptable outlet for her erotic feelings about women—as there were accredited ways of ways for the Apostolic Cambridge homosexuals, or for randy bohemian artists” (245). Similarly, in *Banishing the Beast*, Lucy Bland notes that: “Unlike Berlin and Paris, London, as far as historians can discover, had no lesbian subculture before the first world war” (169; qtd in Wachman n46).

Referring implicitly to the sexual freedoms and opportunities of men in general, as well as those of male homosexuals in particular, Woolf writes in a letter to Ethel Smyth on 15 August 1930: “When I go to what we call a Buggery Poke party, I feel as if I had strayed into the male urinal; a wet, smelly, trivial kind of place” (L4: 200). Her mention of the male urinal calls attention to the absence of equivalent female spaces of any sort. The one work of fiction where Woolf mentions women’s public conveniences, a very short story humorously entitled “The Watering Place,” is set in a fishy-smelling women’s restroom at a seaside resort. Working class women, gossiping while using the “compartments,” flush at intervals, drowning out the conversations: “The water gushed …The tide foamed and withdrew” (291). The reader then overhears a fragment of a conversation in which a woman says: “But he ought to be more careful. If he’s caught doing it, he’ll be courtmartialed!” (291-92), perhaps hinting that he regularly risks the danger of committing homosexual acts in public settings such as urinals.

---

4 In her diary, on 2 February 1933, she meditates on the death of John Galsworthy as she walks along the Serpentine having just called on her mother-in-law, noting “Mrs. Woolf (who’s been dying—is recovering) (D4: 146-47).

5 Kathryn Simpson offers a rich, complex and layered discussion of the erotics of shopping in Gifts, Markets and Economies of Desire in Virginia Woolf.


7 See, for example, Hynes 225 quoted in Das 216 regarding court-martials for “gross indecency” during the Great War. The initiation of the1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, known as the Labouchère Amendment, resulted in what can be viewed as persecution of homosexual men. One of the most notorious instances was, of course, Oscar Wilde’s sentencing to two years of hard labor in 1895.

---

The Baedeker’s Description of Serpentine Bathing (fig. 1) (Many thanks to Elisa Sparks for providing this image.)
Not only urinals, but also many other public venues offered opportunities for male homosexual gratification. In “A Man with a View” (1916), Woolf observes that Samuel Butler, in his The Way of All Flesh, “reminds one of those eccentric and insistent people who persist in bathing daily in the Serpentine” (Contemporary Writers 31). Almost certainly Woolf is referring to the Serpentine Swimming Club, founded in 1864. Charles Maurice Davies in Mystic London (1875) invokes the nuances of the Serpentine bathing experience in detail:

> There are few more exhilarating things, on a breezy spring morning, than a spurt across that wonderful rus in urbe—Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park—for a prospective dip in the Serpentine, where, at specified hours every morning and evening, waterloving London is privileged to dispose itself in its congenial element. So congenial is it, in fact, that some enthusiastic individuals do not limit themselves to warm summer mornings, or the cooler ones of springtide and autumn, but bathe all the year round—even, it is said, when a way for their manoeuvres has to be cut through the ice. Skirting the north bank of the Serpentine at morning or evening in the summer, the opposite shore appears absolutely pink with nude humanity, the younger portion dancing and gambolling very much after the manner of Robinson Crusoe’s cannibals! [...] From the all-the-year-round bathers, as a nucleus, there has grown up, within the last few years, the Serpentine Swimming Club; and on Christmas-day in the morning they have an annual match open to all comers.8 (http://www.victorianlondon.org/)

Of course, what Davies’s account does not state is that all the bathers disporting themselves are male (and almost certainly Caucasian). As Matt Cook points out, Baedeker’s guide (fig. 1) touted the Serpentine bathing experience, confirming the sex of the bathers: “a crowd of men and boys [...] are to be seen undressing and plunging into the waters, where their lusty shouts and hearty laughter testify their enjoyment” (36-37). Cook goes on to discuss the inherent benefits of the Serpentine to men like John Addington Symonds who found emotional respite in watching the bathers (37). As Matt Houlbrook observes:

> Open air queer culture assumed its most distinctive form around the bathing pools provided by municipal authorities as part of the nineteenth-century drive for improving leisure facilities. Screened by a fence and—following the dictates of public morality—open only to men, the stipulation that the bathers should be naked offered men an institutionalized and highly enjoyable opportunity to relax and watch each other—what Michael Davidson termed a “wonderful lot of juvenile nudity” (55).

Woolf would probably have been aware of the homoerotic activity at the Serpentine by the time she was writing Melymbrosia—the novel that ultimately became The Voyage Out—not just from private conversations, but from such works of art as Duncan Grant’s homoerotic 1911 mural, “Bathing,” now in the Tate, which is described by Richard Cork as based “ostensibly [on] a scene witnessed by the artist at the Serpentine lake in Hyde Park, [...] show[ing] athletic male bodies diving, swimming and climbing aboard a boat in a sequential manner” (Cork 120). Cork’s comment validates the premise that Duncan and other homosexual men in Woolf’s circle would have frequented the site. Brian Pronger calls attention to the evident homoerotic effects of Grant’s painting, noting that: “The ‘respectability’ of the visual arts and the well-established tradition of nude representations was an early vehicle for the imaging of young male athletes” and “Bathing” is a classic example, “celebrating the movement of muscular bodies through water, [and] show[ing] from behind a naked swimmer climbing into a boat, buttocks spread promisingly” (166). Emmanuel Cooper observes that a critic from the Times thought that the mural was suggestive and could have a “degenerative influence on the children of the working classes” (Sexual Perspective 115). Regarding the provenance of the work, Clare A. P. Willson observes that the painting is one of “seven ‘removable’ panels painted under Roger Fry’s direction for the Borough Polytechnic on the theme of London on Holiday” (Willson 283), noting that Grant experiments “with visualizing events in time, suggesting influence from sequential photography and cinematic images” (283; regarding sequential photography, see also Cooper, Fully Exposed 27-36).

Possibly Grant’s painting could even have been based on photographs actually taken at the Serpentine. Houlbrook mentions “the architect Montague Glover [who] roamed the Serpentine, Hampstead Ponds, and Victoria Park, photographing the bathing youths he saw in a visual record of outdoor queer life” during the interwar period (55). Certainly photographs of men and boys bathing in the Serpentine survive. To envision what the Serpentine was like, see the anonymous photograph from c. 1902 depicting men on the bank of the Serpentine in Cook’s Homosexuality (36) and the anonymous photograph of young boys bathing nude in the Serpentine during the early 1920s from Cooper’s Fully Exposed (79). Both photographs represent typical activities at this spot.

So how does Woolf reference the Serpentine in her fiction? Woolf mentions the Serpentine in only six works: The Voyage Out (1915), Jacob’s Room (1922), Mrs. Dalloway (1925), “Moments of Being: ‘Slater’s Pins Have No Points’” (c. 1927), Orlando (1928) and The Years (1931). In the first four works, one or more allusions to the Serpentine are linked to what would have been deemed deviant sexuality at the time, while in Orlando and The Years the references seem more subtle in nature.

In The Voyage Out, Terence Hewet shares with Rachel Vinrace his idea for a novel revolving around a young man who resembles Duncan Grant in several respects, including his shabby clothing and his pecuniary straits (see Bell 128). Terence’s fictitious young man “manages to exist at Cambridge on a hundred pounds a year [...] [and] goes up to London, [where he] gets into good society, owing to an early-morning adventure on the banks of the Serpentine” (217). Given the homosocial and homoerotic nuances of the Serpentine setting, it seems safe to suggest that the nameless young man in Terence’s unwritten novel is engaging in early morning bathing activities at the Serpentine when he has his “adventure.” The word choice itself suggests something risky and also hints that the young man has established a homosexual liaison that beneficially alters his financial and social standing.

One of the three references to the Serpentine in Jacob’s Room also resonates with similarly homoerotic implications. As Kate Flint notes, Woolf’s revisions of the holograph version for publication shift systematically from the specific to the allusive with regard to sexuality. Thus, in the published novel, “Jacob’s acknowledgement of Bonamy’s homosexuality is replaced, at the equivalent point in the final text, by the more delicate hint of the scholar’s genteel trip to talk about Jacob with Clara Durrant, ‘pausing to watch the boys bathing in the Serpentine’ (144) on his way home” (370).

Aside from Virginia’s letter to Violet noted earlier, Mrs. Dalloway seems to offer the only instance in which the Serpentine addresses both suicide and sexual defiance. Both references to the Serpentine are associated with Clarissa having “thrown a shilling” (9; 180) into the body of water, and her memories of the action are linked to sexually transgressive desire (see Simpson, “Economies” 26). Clarissa’s first recollection of flinging the coin into the Serpentine occurs early during her morning stroll down Bond Street. The memory is peripherally aligned with what seems to be Clarissa’s fleeting Sapphic fantasy about the handsome, dark-complexioned Lady Bexborough, with her “skin of crumpled leather and

---

8 - The Serpentine Swimming Club launched the Christmas Morning Handicap Swim in 1864 and “in 1904 [...] Sir James Barrie, the novelist, immortalised the race by presenting the first ‘Peter Pan Cup’” (see the Serpentine Swimming Club website: http://www.serpentineswimmingclub.com/).
beautiful eyes” (9) becoming her lover. Lady Bexborough is, after all, “the woman [Clarissa] admired most” (9; see also 181)—and admiring is closely related to desiring.9

The second time Clarissa thinks of the shilling tossed into the Serpentine, she contrasts her gesture with that of Septimus Warren Smith, her doppelgänger. Septimus, as Woolfians know full well, is a homosexual Great War veteran suffering both from post-traumatic stress disorder and survivor guilt in the aftermath of the death of his commanding officer, Evans, who was also his lover.10 Septimus has recognized that conventional society and its minions (men like Dr. Hunter and Sir William Bradshaw) will relentlessly pursue him and torment him unless he takes his own life. His doctors are the medical counterparts of the police officers who patrolled the public urinals in the West End, arresting men suspected of being engaged in gross indecency [e.g., *Houlbrook* 26]) or ordering them to leave the bathing area of the Serpentine. Clarissa’s insignificant gesture (“she had thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more” [180]) is the secret marker of her thwarted sexual identity. At this moment, she also recalls for the second time in the book her experience of rapture verging on death (“if it were now to die ‘were now to be most happy’” [34; 180]):

That was her feeling—Othello’s feeling, and she felt it, she was convinced, as strongly as Shakespeare meant Othello to feel it, all because she was coming down to dinner in a white frock to meet Sally Seton!” (34; see 180)

As various scholars have noted, Clarissa wonders whether Septimus may actually have preserved his sexual integrity (“had he plunged holding his treasure” [180]). Even though Septimus does not actually drown himself in the Serpentine, Clarissa associates his death both with the Serpentine and with the death of her own suppressed sexuality, her failure to die for love. This inner death seems to be represented by the paltry coin vanishing in the waters of the Serpentine when instead Clarissa could have and did not make a much bolder sacrifice—living independently with a woman instead of choosing a conventional marriage.

More coded references to the Serpentine in Woolf’s work occur in a passage in “Moments of Being: ‘Slater’s Pins Have No Points.’”11 As Janet Winston and Kathryn Simpson (“Economies”) alike indicate, the story itself is infused with Sapphic desire. Young Fanny Wilmot imagines Miss Julia Craye’s Victorian youth, wondering “why she had not married” (216), and envisioning a moment when a (possibly imaginary) Mr. Sherman fails to propose to the young Julia Craye while they row on the Serpentine and a chaperone or an aunt awaits on the bank their return:

"...I enjoyed your abuse very much” (L3: 125). In her letter of 21 December to Vita become steadily more playful and flirtatious (for example, she writes: “Vita has the body and brain of a Greek God” (L3: 85), and her letters in December 1925. In a letter in Clive Bell from 23 January 1924, Virginia had first met in December 1922. Woolf was herself fantasizing about her own impending love affair. Vita and

As various scholars have noted, Clarissa wonders whether Septimus may actually have preserved his sexual integrity (“had he plunged holding his treasure?” [180]). Even though Septimus does not actually drown himself in the Serpentine, Clarissa associates his death both with the Serpentine and with the death of her own suppressed sexuality, her failure to die for love. This inner death seems to be represented by the paltry coin vanishing in the waters of the Serpentine when instead Clarissa could have and did not make a much bolder sacrifice—living independently with a woman instead of choosing a conventional marriage.

More coded references to the Serpentine in Woolf’s work occur in a passage in “Moments of Being: ‘Slater’s Pins Have No Points.’”11 As Janet Winston and Kathryn Simpson (“Economies”) alike indicate, the story itself is infused with Sapphic desire. Young Fanny Wilmot imagines Miss Julia Craye’s Victorian youth, wondering “why she had not married” (216), and envisioning a moment when a (possibly imaginary) Mr. Sherman fails to propose to the young Julia Craye while they row on the Serpentine and a chaperone or an aunt awaits on the bank their return:

9 Lady Bexborough is strikingly attractive to Clarissa, and her behavior resembles Vita Sackville-West’s commanding and decisive personality, suggesting that Woolf was herself fantasizing about her own impending love affair. Vita and Virginia had first met in December 1922. *Mrs. Dalloway* was published in May 1925, and, as Suzanne Raitt documents (1), Vita and Virginia became lovers in December 1925. In a letter in Clive Bell from 23 January 1924, Virginia writes: “Vita has the body and brain of a Greek God” (L3: 85), and her letters to Vita become steadily more playful and flirtatious (for example, she writes on 19 August 1924 “I enjoyed your intimate letter from the Dolomites. It gave me a great deal of pain—which is I’ve no doubt the first stage of intimacy[,] [...] I enjoyed your abuse very much” (L3: 125). In her letter of 21 December 1924, she refers to Vita as a “dear old obtuse, aristocratic, passionate Grenadier” (D2: 324). Gay Wachman, referencing the Grenadier motif, links Vita not to Lady Bexborough but to Lady Bruton, one of multiple lesbian figures in *Mrs. Dalloway* (137-38). Interestingly, Kitty Lasswade in *The Years* is also called “The Grenadier” (Hussey 142).

10 For one of the most detailed discussions of Septimus’s homosexuality, see Eileen Barrett.

11 Susan Dick suggests that the “nice little story about Sapphism, written for the Americans,” about which Woolf told Vita Sackville-West on 8 July 1927, was probably “‘Slater’s Pins’” (306).
Woolf’s use of the adjective “serpentine,” as documented above, seems to be very sensual and rather frequently Sapphic. In contrast, her references to the body of water known as the Serpentine evolve from marking it as a site of danger where women drown themselves and men pursue transgressive sexual encounters to a place where alternative sexualities and desires can be envisioned and accepted, whether or not they are actually fulfilled.

**Vara Neverow**

**Southern Connecticut State University**

**Works Cited**


INTERIOR, psychological “space” has become a staple of critical writing on modernism, following the modernists themselves in their concern with what Woolf termed “the dark places of psychology” (“Modern Fiction”). The editors of this collection of ten pithy essays make clear that their contributors are guided less by Bachelard than by Baudelaire and de Certeau, that space “produced through social practice” will be valorized over those material spaces—houses, streets—that might have been expected as Woolf’s locations.

Eschewing a conventional overview of the volume’s contents, Snaithe and Whitworth use their introduction to model the investigation of socially produced space that is the collection’s raison d’être. Their analysis of three key spaces in Woolf’s writing—Kingsway in Night and Day, Trafalgar Square and environs in Mrs. Dalloway, and the Docks in “The London Scene”—demonstrate the ease with which Woolf can be placed in the company of modern theoreticians of space such as Raymond Williams, in addition to those already mentioned. In keeping with the socio-cultural tendency of literary studies now, we learn much about the material history of London planning, traffic patterns, and demographics from the editors’ research, and this attentiveness to documentary evidence persists throughout the collection.

Tracy Seeley uses the narrator’s progress through the locations of A Room of One’s Own to exemplify clearly how “spatial practice” produces society’s spaces, articulating convincingly how “mental and physical movement become analogous” in Woolf’s essay. As the narrator is forced to change course by a beadle, a locked door, and other obstacles, the pathways of her thought also are diverted, putting a woman in her “place” in the patriarchal world she is walking through. The question raised in A Room of what happens when a woman enters a room is cleverly picked up in Helen Southworth’s examination of Isa Oliver entering the library where her father-in-law snoozes over the newspaper in Between the Acts. Once again, the narrative enact the interruption of patriarchal space by a woman. Southworth reads the novel’s sentences closely to show how what Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse called “the problem of space” remains to be dealt with in Between the Acts, a work in which many spaces have changed their character over time; chapel becomes larder, Temple becomes Barn, and so on.

Sei Kosugi enriches our reading of Between the Acts in her account of Woolf’s reading of Gilbert White’s Natural History of Selborne, a work that provided the Victorian middle classes with a powerful image of “home” that lingers in the conversations and imaginations of the older generation at Pointz Hall. Information about the 1930s countryside conservation movement and its influence on village pageants of the time provides much enlightening detail about what transpires in Woolf’s last novel. The rural conservation movement is also addressed by Leena Kore Schroder’s essay on Woolf and the motor car, which in its treatment of “Evening Over Sussex” (an important intertext for Between the Acts) provides a welcome explicitly phenomenological reading of Woolf’s notions of embodied being.

Linden Peach remarks that the “influence” of Walter Sickert on Woolf has received little attention, and I could not help but wonder if this might be because the influence is slight. In fairness, though, Peach acknowledges that influence might be better described as a shared interest “in the way in which space is invested with meaning through relations between objects and the human subject.” He notes that Woolf was at work on The Years at the time she became reacquainted with Sickert’s work (her essay on the painter was published in 1934), and in opening the question of Woolf’s “realism,” Peach provides a particularly salient example of how this collection might provoke new readings of Woolf’s fiction and essays. In fact, it is in the bringing together of non-fiction and fiction that many of these essays find their most innovative readings.

Kurt Koenigsberger’s essay on the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley provides the clearest example of the fruitfulness of this reading of Woolf’s fiction and non-fiction alongside one another. Like Peach, he is concerned with Woolf’s notions of the “real,” and in comparing her critique in “Thunder at Wembley” of the Exhibition’s attempt at “realism” with her critique of Edwardian writers in “Character in Fiction,” Koenigsberger shows lucidly how Woolf was led to her famous concern with “character” by her understanding of how people “turn physical places […] into special and personal spaces in which narrative unfolds.”

Suzanne Lynch and Nobuyoshi Ota each in their essays consider specific politically charged “spaces,” demonstrating that the title of this collection can stretch to an almost infinite capaciousness (the five subheadings under which the various contributions appear are unconvincing in their attempt at specificity). Lynch points out the persistent presence in Woolf’s writing of the “Irish Question,” and argues that her one visit to Ireland in 1934 likely complicated her feelings about the issue. In providing Delia Pargiter, who in her youth romanticized Parnell and the cause of Irish nationalism, with a conservative Anglo-Irish husband, Patrick, Lynch argues, Woolf introduced an ironic perspective on “one of the most significant political issues of Edwardian England.” Ota focuses his “geopolitical” reading of The Waves on Louis, the businessman. More explicitly informed than other essays by material history, Ota’s argues that Woolf’s text’s concern with the global exceeds a narrowly conceived imperialism that has been the focus of other critics’ political readings of The Waves. I am not, though, convinced that to understand Louis we really “need to examine Britain’s appeasement policy towards Japan as well as Chinese monetary reform in 1935.” Woolf is a deeply politically informed writer, but her fictions were not government white papers.

A more conventional approach to space is provided in Ian Blyth’s useful documenting of how Woolf drew on Halkuyt’s writings, particularly for the geography of Orlando (it was good to see the work of Alice Fox acknowledged here). Jane Lewty’s essay on how the radio turned war into an acoustic experience for those on the home front, and how the wireless may have affected Woolf’s notions of time and space could have appeared under any number of other rubrics. Within the “space” of this volume, it seemed somewhat anomalous, and yet that space is so infinitely malleable that it can exclude nothing from the lived experience of reading Woolf’s writing.

**Mark Hussey**
Pace University

---

**REVIEW**

**LOCATING WOOLF: THE POLITICS OF SPACE AND PLACE**

**VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE VICTORIANS**

When Virginia Woolf completed Jacob’s Room in 1922—modernism’s annum mirabilis—she confessed in her diary: “There’s no doubt in my mind that I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice; & that interests me so that I feel I can go ahead without praise” (Diary 1: 186). Her declaration of artistic independence seems, on the surface, to chime easily with modernism’s assertion of the new as a self-authenticating break with the past; a rupture that, in Woolf’s refashioning, resonates with a woman’s sense of her own empowerment (“own voice,” “without praise”) combined with her not incidental
Ellis’s book is, in many ways, less concerned with Woolf’s self-construction as a modernist novelist than with what he defines as the tendency in more recent critical reception of her canon to overemphasize the discontinuities, ruptures, and destructive impulses of the ‘new’ at the expense of a lingering, though circumscribed, nostalgia for the ‘old’: the memories, experiences, and sensibilities reflected in the works of a woman writer born into the era of high Victorianism. For Ellis, terminological distinctions matter. To unequivocally brand Woolf a “modernist” ignores her deep, abiding, and life-long negotiation with a Victorian heritage to be found with varying degrees of emphasis and affect not only in those discredited (and critically under-examined) early novels, but in virtually all her major writings. So even the modernist/pre-modernist binary is illusory. Ellis prefers the more capacious term, Post-Victorian, which eschews the differently rigidifying effects of either “modernist” or “neo-Victorian,” proving itself—in gently and appropriately utilitarian guise—the most “serviceable” (10) descriptor of Woolf’s aesthetic. Post-Victorianism for Ellis allows critics to balance an assessment of Woolf’s innovations in the form of the novel with her continual struggles to reconcile past and present, old and new, Victorian and modern in ways that highlight intergenerational dialogue, individualism within community, and a resistance to history set adrift from its anchors, particularly when they are moored in certain Victorian code-words Woolf strongly identified with such as “passion,” “imagination,” “energy,” “romance,” and “individualism.” “[The Victorians always remain powerfully present to [Woolf]] Ellis writes in a reading of Night and Day that glosses his own critical approach, “always asking for some sort of perpetuation in the culture of the present which otherwise risks impoverishment” (41).

Virginia Woolf and the Victorians, with its idiomatic emphasis on a ‘new’ critical vocabulary informed by the “Victorian retrospective” (14), coincides with and makes new contributions to a growing body of literature about Woolf’s nineteenth-century influences, literary and otherwise: Jane de Gay’s Virginia Woolf’s Novels and the Literary Past (2006); Emily Blair’s Virginia Woolf and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel (2007); and Alison Light’s Mrs Woolf and the Servants (2007). Ellis differs from the first two in that his book is declaredly not a study of literary influences on Woolf or her labyrinthine reading practices so much as it is a textual and linguistic analysis of the imaginative pull of what we might call Woolf’s Victorian habits of mind. Ellis persuasively argues in a richly cross-referenced analysis of her diaries, letters, essays and novels, that Woolf’s Victorian cultural conditioning meant she experienced modernity ambivalently, as both gain and loss. In this respect, his book, while not so obviously material-historical, shares some affinity with Alison Light’s in its similar efforts to reconstruct a more culturally and generationally habituated Woolf to temper the progressive image that has dominated criticism from the 1970s onwards. Certainly, Ellis’s portrait, grounded as it is in meticulous, wide-ranging close readings, presents a more ambivalent, sober, and even conservative Woolf than some readers will recognize. Yet he nonetheless offers us distinctive metaphors and reinvigorated intellectual paradigms through which we might newly theorize the complex, multi-faceted interrelationships that connect questions of cultural legacy, textual production, and historical periodization not just for twenty-first century Woolf studies but also for critical interventions in the modernism/modernity nexus writ large.

While Ellis covers Woolf’s entire canon, his chapter headings prioritize four novels, designating them with keywords that summarize Woolf’s efforts to make past and present cohere. In “Reclamation: Night and Day,” Ellis counters the Mansfieldian accusation that the novel gave lie to the contemporary shock of war by arguing for its Jamesian informed attempts not to reject the war or the present moment per se, but rather to “gather the modern back within traditional tropes, to retraditionalize it” (28). (Since James has a walk-on part in the novel, visiting the Hibseys for tea in the guise of Mr. Fortescue, there is, too, a delicate thread connecting idea and content.) In “Synchronicity: Mrs Dalloway,” Ellis modifies elegiac interpretations of the novel to foreground the “‘chiming in unison’ of different times” (68) within a novel where “the sense of a new post-War order in social terms [...] is subsisted within a deeper affirmation of continuity that is both social and aesthetic” (68). The struggle to achieve synchronicity gives way to deeper unification in “Integration: To the Lighthouse” which “represents a modern-Victorian conciliation—an androgyny of historical period” (107) where Ellis finds narrative and historical confirmation of Elizabeth Abel’s arguments about the shift in focus from matrilineral to patrilineal in Woolf’s fiction in the late 1920s; as Ellis figures the change: “[The romance of the Victorian is retrieved in To the Lighthouse but at the same time practically laid to rest, along with the mother” (107). With this laying to rest of the Victorian maternal, Ellis’s study of Woolf in the 1930s, “Disillusion: The Years,” charts her difficulty at maintaining a well-wrought balance between “critique and fidelity” (113) in terms of her Victorian retrospective. The thwarted success of the novel-essay format in The Pargiters Ellis suggests is constitutive of this imbalance, and his readings of Woolf’s 1930s writings are particularly illuminating and provocative in the way they argue implicitly for deeper material-historical engagement with the implementation of Woolf’s theories about reading, and their rootedness in a Victorian liberal temperament (though he shies away from this term or its further interrogation) as it confronts the realities of demographic, professional, and cultural change in the 1930s. He reads Three Guineas, for instance, rather against the grain, less for its polemical esprit than as vying (half-ironically) for the laurel of Woolf’s “most *Post-Victorian***” (155) work in its trenchant critique of patriarchal norms combined with its upholding of certain Victorian behavioral legacies that “counter aspects of modernity Woolf remains alarmed by and resistant to” (115).

Although these chapter titles highlight key novels, the interior substance of each one often subsumes extensive analysis of other works (Jacob’s Room and Orlando to name but two). The effect, depending on one’s perspective, is to offer either densely tapestried or slightly digressive commentary on Ellis’s themes. (For instance, he presents a fascinating study of Woolf’s essayistic reservations about the contemporary, including how they shape her modernist manifestos, which nonetheless interrupt the flow of his critique of Mrs Dalloway.) Two important contributions stand out for special note: first, Ellis’s desire to shift the accent away from Woolf’s relationship to the Bloomsbury group and artistic formalism, particularly between 1910 and 1920, as the predominant influence on her aesthetic (a shift in focus that should also draw our attention to other influences including, as I note above, her emergence as a self-publisher); second, his sharp-eyed textual analysis of the uniformly and diachronically consistent ways in which Woolf

---

1. If getting older offers universalist benefits for self-articulation, historians and sociologists of women’s history have long made the positive connection between age and vocal assertion. Compare Woolf’s words with these recent remarks by Sandra Day O’Connor, the first woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court: “The best thing about growing older is that one is no longer afraid to speak one’s mind. As we age, we no longer worry about what others may think” (Stanford BeWell Bulletin 8).

2. This reconstruction, expressed in a letter to Ethel Smyth in 1930, was at least a partial misremembering since Woolf’s 1919 diary records delight at the ease and pleasure with which she composed the first half of Night and Day (D1: 259).
harnesses images of light and dark in her evocative and pervasive use of chiaroscuro to mediate the competing claims of the Victorian and the modern, a trope that appears to have permeated her fictional and nonfictional work in ways that convince us how far an unfiltered modernity could sometimes shine with too much ‘glare.’

As mentioned above, Ellis’s work derives some of its impetus from a desire to recalibrate criticism of Woolf that has emphasized her progressive politics to the exclusion of more conservative or even reactionary views. While this is a necessary and in its way clarifying remapping of Woolf’s cultural and historical status as a public intellectual, I found at times that the overemphasis on particular Woolf criticisms (Elaine Showalter, Alex Zwerdling, Jane Marcus, and Jane Goldman) as oppositional sparring partners occluded other critics of modernism more generally or within the wide arena of Woolf studies itself (no less the changes in these named critics’ views over time) that might have allowed a slightly more dualistic, both/and model of critical reappraisal in certain instances. (And while undoubtedly not Ellis’s choice, since its absence features in several Cambridge University Press books, I remain baffled at the omission of a full bibliography in such scholarly books, unless there is some compelling case to be made by university presses for paper rationing.) For instance, while Ellis inventively proves that Jacob’s Room is a paean to Woolf’s deep ambivalence for the glaring light of modernity, it is additionally and concurrently a feminist critique of a society that turns men’s bodies into cannon fodder (as William Handley has argued); or, while Mrs Dalloway is certainly a novel rooted in a conservative politics of action (where, as Ellis nicely articulates it, the ‘Victorian’ and very English temperamental and class-coded values of stability, gradualism, reticence and restraint are Woolf’s too) it is also a pervasive war elegy larger than the circumstances of Woolf’s own life (as Christine Froula, among others, has recently argued).

Despite these caveats, Ellis’s book makes important contributions to the ever-evolving reassessments of Woolf’s political vision, cultural values, and narratological contributions to the form of the novel. It is a compelling book readers will grapple with and argue over, delighting in its close readings, even as it promises to lay the foundations for new archival and theoretical reformulations of Woolf that emerge in the coming years.

Alice Staveley
Stanford University

Works Cited

REVIEW
MODERNISM, MEDIA, AND PROPAGANDA: BRITISH NARRATIVE FROM 1900 TO 1945

How is literary modernism shaped by its contemporary association with and self-conscious rebellion against propaganda? The question has been addressed often, but it continues to prompt thoughtful scholarship, such as Mark Wollaeger’s Modernism, Media, and Propaganda, a cultural history of British narrative that compares diverse media with selected modernist fictions by Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, Ford Madox Ford, and James Joyce. The media include films, picture postcards of African women, wartime nationalist texts designed to control the dissemination of facts, and World War I recruiting posters. Basing his analysis of propaganda on the work of Jacques Ellul, Wollaeger also draws upon archival research and upon feminist and modernist literary scholarship. In four chapters, he juxtaposes films, photographs, wartime texts, and posters with close readings of four novels: Conrad’s The Secret Agent, Woolf’s The Voyage Out, Ford’s The Good Soldier, and Joyce’s Ulysses. Wollaeger’s fifth chapter pairs Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles (both Hollywood filmmakers of the thirties and government-sponsored films created during World War II); Wollaeger concludes his literary history with film narrative, because he believes that, by the nineteen-thirties, film had become the dominant cultural medium, replacing literature. Wollaeger concludes his literary history with film narrative, because he believes that, by the nineteen-thirties, film had become the dominant cultural medium, replacing literature. Twenty-seven illustrations, mostly postcards (in the chapter on Woolf) and posters (in the chapter on Joyce), complement the cultural analysis. Wollaeger’s organizing argument is that the new media of the twentieth century provide an environment, “a media ecology” (xvi), which shapes both modern propaganda and modernism.

Mark Wollaeger’s previously published essays on Virginia Woolf and his conference paper at the Tenth Annual Virginia Woolf Conference will make his scholarship familiar to many readers of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany. In this book, he collects those and revises them into chapter 2, entitled “The Woolfs, Picture Postcards, and the Propaganda of Everyday Life.” Wollaeger reworks his earlier essays, emphasizing here the influence that reading Leonard Woolf’s The Village in the Jungle had on Virginia Stephen as she considered marriage to Leonard and as she revised Melymbrosia into The Voyage Out. In her published novel, Wollaeger asserts, Virginia Woolf “radically changed three crucial scenes up river: the moment in which Rachel and Terence declare their love while deep in the jungle; the ensuing moment in which Helen wrestles Rachel to the ground and stuffs grass into her mouth, and the culminating moment of the expedition, the entry into a native village” (105) in order to reflect her rejection of Leonard’s “narrative omniscience” (110), her discomfort in Leonard’s “sexual advances” (107), her rebellion against the normalization of heterosexual marriage, and her ambiguous “encounter with imperialist propaganda” (122) in Rachel Vinrace’s exchange of stares with native women. Wollaeger’s analysis of imperial desire in picture postcards depicting native women forms the ideological context for his interpretation. According to Wollaeger, “Woolf struggles to find a way for Rachel to identify with the native women without finding herself complicit in their subjection” (122), but ultimately fails in that struggle, instead “creating a world in which only death can release Rachel from the bind of either stepping into a picture postcard or snapping one” (123). Drawing evidence from Woolf’s essay on the 1924 ethnographic exhibition at Wembley, Wollaeger is certain that Woolf attended some earlier international exhibition, possibly the one in London in 1909, which influenced her portrayals of native women in The Voyage Out (84). Extending his argument to the novelist’s whole literary career, Wollaeger claims Woolf’s modernism is shaped by a feminist reaction against patriarchal integration propaganda.
Wollaeger’s analysis of the colonialist ideology in picture postcards of native women is indeed compelling, and the mass circulation of such photographs on postcards directly influenced popular British conceptions of colonial women. Was Woolf directly influenced by them? There is no evidence that Woolf sent, received, or commented on native women as they were depicted in picture postcards—Wollaeger’s citations of Woolf’s letters referring to picture postcards come from letters written in 1920, 1925, and 1938; moreover, the picture postcards mentioned in Woolf’s letters do not depict colonial women. As Wollaeger acknowledges, “whether Woolf ever received such a postcard [...] is impossible to say, but [her essay on the Wembley exhibition] reveals that she thought deeply about the propagandistic effects of colonial exhibitions” (84).

In his chapter on Joyce’s Ulysses and the British World War I recruiting posters, Wollaeger’s evidence of Joyce’s political critique is quite persuasive. In his chapter on Conrad’s The Secret Agent, Wollaeger writes thoughtfully about Conrad’s understanding of propaganda and about Hitchcock’s adaptation of The Secret Agent in his film Sabotage (1936). In his chapter on Ford, Wollaeger argues that The Good Soldier, the essays defining literary impressionism, and the wartime propaganda books, When Blood Is Their Argument and Between St. Dennis and St. George, reflect “the shared dynamic between impressionism and propaganda [...] to restore wholeness and feeling to information” (143).

As a “Coda” to his cultural history, Wollaeger acknowledges that modernism as a literary movement may be dead, but he affirms that teaching modernist narrative is vital in today’s culture. Wollaeger makes a plea for teaching critical reading skills, which “do not, of course, live or die with literary modernism” (267). The skills of close reading and the cultural interpretation of information have never been more necessary to informed citizens. It is important to Wollaeger, and to many of us, that Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf be read not as isolated aesthetes but as engaged political writers.

Judith L. Johnston Rider University

Works Cited


REVIEW
COLOR, SPACE, AND CREATIVITY: ART AND ONTOLOGY IN FIVE BRITISH WRITERS

This is a wide-ranging book on a difficult and interesting topic, well researched, and written in a readable style. A life-long Lawrence scholar, Stewart devotes three chapters to Lawrence; four are devoted to Byatt, two to Durrell and one each to Cary and Woolf. All five write in “painterly styles that appeal to readers’ powers of visualization” that construct a world beyond language (15). Lawrence, in particular in his letters and travel books, is seen to link his observations of color and space to painting. Yet Stewart aims to go beyond existing studies of the relationship between novelists and painting, to explore such elusive matters as Merleau-Ponty’s concept of colors as “different modalities of our co-existence with the world” (15). Stewart constructs his argument on an elaborate system of parallels and similarities, in which texts by painters and art critics, with the occasional reference to a painting, are compared with the work of the five novelists.

What is probably of most interest to Miscellany readers is the opening chapter, on To the Lighthouse. Stewart starts with Roger Fry’s observation that the Post-Impressionist movement was not confined to painting. Woolf’s stories “Kew Gardens” and “Blue & Green,” are a response to Fry, although Woolf later judged them too imitative of painting. Stewart’s method is to compare a sentence from Woolf’s essay “Walter Sickert”: “Words are an impure medium...better far to have been born into the silent kingdom of paint” with another by a Bauhaus artist, Johannes Itten, that “Colors are primordial ideas” (37). Itten’s theory of color, that red is active and aggressive, blue “visionary” and associated with passivity and distance, governs the discussion of the Ramsays’ marriage. Mr. Ramsay is associated with red and aggressive intellectuality, Mrs. Ramsay with the blue of spiritual vision. Although Stewart writes of “fruitful interactions” between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, his analysis of color tends to immobilize them as points on a spectrum. Located at either end, “Mr. Ramsay’s intellectual vision is blocked by infrared rays; at the other Mrs. Ramsay’s spiritual vision dissolves in a haze bordering on ultraviolet” (28).

That Woolf invites her reader to see a dimension of narrative and character beyond language is evident throughout her work, in particular in “Time Passes,” which is not part of Stewart’s argument. Instead he derives that extra dimension from color. In the design of the novel each character is located on an axis. In Part III “on the yellow/violet axis, Carmichael’s glow contrasts with Mrs. Ramsay’s shadow; on the red/green axis, the passionate warmth of Mr. Ramsay, Tansley, and Rayley contrasts with the coolness of Cam and Lily” (40). The axis leads to a grouping that denies individual difference and to what seems to me a mistaken emphasis on “passionate warmth” in these three male figures. The analysis of color and space invites the reader to “pass beyond the words on the page to attain ‘that luminous silent stasis’ in which ‘esthetic pleasure’ merges with human understanding” (41).

The second section of the chapter concerns Part III, where “objective space that has fallen into the vortex of raw time and nature is resaturated with subjective duration” (44). Lily uses the virtual space of the canvas to turn inward to her memories of the Ramsays, and recompose elements from Part I from the perspective of the painter. Here Stewart compares Lily’s aesthetic principles with criticism by Rudolf Arnheim on perspective, Anton Ehrenzweig on the creative process, and Merleau-Ponty on the parallels between writing and painting. On the difficult question of aura Stewart turns briefly to Walter Benjamin’s definition as “the unique phenomenon of a distance” that links veneration with authenticity (51; see Benjamin 224). The subtext of the chapter concerns the artist’s ability to transform unconscious memory and feeling, as though vision constructed a world parallel to that of Proust and Freud, who are scarcely mentioned. Stewart’s book helps the reader appreciate that vision is the means by which Woolf together with many of the great Western novelists struggled against intellect to create a world that is barely visible at the horizon of rationality.

Emily Dalgarno
Boston University

Work Cited
Review

Imagining Virginia Woolf: An Experiment in Critical Biography


Does the Writing make the Life, or does the Life make the Writing, to echo Mr. Plumer of Jacob’s Room? For many readers Woolf’s life resonates in her writing, but how to describe this transmutation? How to fix it, even for a moment, when every reader is free to imagine an author, so that James Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus finds the springs of Shakespeare’s art in wounded desire “there where love lies bleeding” while Woolf’s Mary Beton conjures Shakespeare as a genius of anonymity, unfettered by identity, personality, contingency?

If the few surviving documents of Shakespeare’s life give rise to such different Bards, the massive archive of Woolf’s life is no more restrictive. Imumerable gazes have refracted aspects of her life into portraits, from her own diaries, letters, memoirs, and autobiographical “sketches” to those by the Bloomsbury Memoir Club and other contemporaries—Vanessa Bell, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Winifred Holtby, John Lehmann, her nephew Quentin Bell, and many more—and later biographers such as Lyndall Gordon, Louise DeSalvo, John King, Panthea Reid, John Mepham, Hermione Lee, Stephen Trombley, Thomas Caramagno, Herbert Marder, and Julia Briggs. Then too there are the scripts, performances, adaptations, and settings, from those by Eileen Atkins, Kathleen Worley, and Dominique Argento to the popular, if notoriously ahistorical, fictional Virginia Woolf co-created by Michael Cunningham, David Hare, Stephen Daldry, and Nicole Kidman.

With their varying archives, emphases, approaches, and degrees of authenticity, these representations offer takes—sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory—on Virginia Stephen Woolf’s family history, education, friends, associates, servants, marriage, teaching, press, doctors, diagnoses, sexual experience, creative process, houses, haunts, bread-making, travels, final years, suicide, posthumous nose, and much more. Is there, then, no Common Woolf? Or do all surviving documents, objects, and constructions together project a Common Woolf that we might think of as a kind of hologram: the afterlife of a life, there and not there, unfixed, ever-changing, catching and bouncing the light from myriad angles and sources? In either case, perhaps any Woolf biography—indeed, any biography—is more experimental than definitive, for what writing can capture a life?

Embracing the multifariousness of both Woolf as a subject and the genre of biography, Maria DiBattista’s Imagining Virginia Woolf: An Experiment in Critical Biography poses the question: “how should one read an author?” (4). For DiBattista, Woolf the author has, as Roland Barthes writes in Sade/Fourier/Loyola, “‘no unity,’ ‘being rather a ‘plural of ‘charms’ [...] a discontinuous chant of ambiabilities, in which we nevertheless read death more certainly than in the epic of fate’” (7-8). Yet for her the author remains if not “a person” at least “that mirage called personality” (8). One should read an author, DiBattista proposes, not as a character in her own work, nor as her narrators, nor as a person, a nexus of opinions, or even a signature style, but as “a figment of our imagination” (5). Her own “figment” of Woolf is one “that has slowly formed in my mind...from the impressions, some more concrete than others, that I collect as I am reading her”—a figment subjective, evanescent, perhaps misconceived yet “never insubstantial in its impact upon us” (6). This figment is not to be mistaken for an attempt to portray “the figure of the author,” for it emerges dialectically from the tension between readers’ sympathy and readerly judgment, shaped by what Woolf calls “a demon in us who whispers, ‘I hate, I love’” (6). Rather than making claims “about the kind of person Woolf really was,” Imagining Woolf seeks “to portray the person captured in the writing itself” (8-9)—a nonbiological person who, like her biographical counterpart, contains multitudes but, unlike her, is exempt from chronological and geographical orders.

Any endeavor to chase down the authorial multitudes Woolf contains would be “doomed from the start,” says DiBattista (13). Instead she offers five exemplary studies of key aspects: the Sibyl of the Drawing Room, Author, Critic, World Writer, and the Adventurer, who drives them all. The Sibyl takes its cues from Virginia Stephen’s portrayal of the “‘half inspired’” Miss Willatt and her befuddled acolytes in her early story “Memos of a Novelist” (1909) and from Orlando’s description of the “hostess” as “our modern Sibyl...a witch who lays her guests under a spell” of illusion in drawing rooms where “no real happiness, no real wit, no real profundity are tolerated” (58; Orlando 146 qtd 61). DiBattista’s sly Sibyl is half visionary, her gaze comprehending “the whole of life,” and “half comic sees,” parodying “all the hideous excessences that have overgrown our modern life, its pomps and conventions and dreary solemnities” (63). As Woolf parleys the apprentice Sibyl into a published Author, DiBattista notes, she adhered to a certain “radical [...] linguistic conservatism,” eschewing the “obscene words” of a Molly Bloom (66-67). The Author “does not flinch before lewd realities” (66) but “increased our sense of what writing is by taking away as much as she bestowed” (70), creating prose rhythms that deftly evoke incertitude and silence, interruption and detour, and performing virtuosic acrobatics of disappearance and dispersal among positions, characters, elastic I’s, and disembodied we’s (70).

In a rewarding chapter on the Critic, DiBattista puts Woolf in dialogue with Dryden, Dr. Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Keats, T. S. Eliot, Benjamin, and Gertrude Stein. The Critic is a virtuosic participant in those dynamic meetings of unlike minds at “common conjunctions” that constitute literary history as a vital, sociable, open-ended, time- and space-traveling conversation (108). In the World Writer chapter, DiBattista makes a high-spirited throwaway—“Xenophila, a Tragedy,” an abandoned draft among Orlando’s juvenilia—an etymological portal to Erich Auerbach’s choice of Woolf as the representative modern European writer in his 1946 classic Mimesis. Auerbach’s profound recognition of the “noncoercive universalism” (123) knitted up in Mrs. Ramsay’s brown stocking did much to establish Woolf in the world canon. DiBattista elaborates the World Writer as an author who, though “not knowing” Greek or Russian, followed her father’s maxim “the hostess” as “our modern Sibyl...a witch who lays her guests under a spell” (70), creating prose rhythms that deftly evoke incertitude and silence, interruption and detour, and performing virtuosic acrobatics of disappearance and dispersal among positions, characters, elastic I’s, and disembodied we’s (70).

Winging over the varied terrain of Woolf’s writings as only a scholar deeply learned in her subject can do, DiBattista takes us on a personal tour of an author she has long known and loved. As Lily Briscoe momentarily aligns her eyebeam with William Bankes’s to see Mrs. Ramsay through his gaze, we align our sights with DiBattista’s to see finely drawn images of Woolf in the clear light of her prose. Some
readers may find some of the grit, pain, and warts of Woolf’s life and work—as of birds pecking at snails, moths flying into lanterns—airbrushed out of these pictures, much as Lily finds that William’s idealized Mrs. Ramsay obscures her own more chiaroscuro vision, but DiBattista’s Five Ways of Looking at an Author both reward her reader’s attention and invite and inspire many more. *Imagining Woolf* is a welcome addition to experimental writing about Woolf’s highly experimental life. 

Christine Froula  
Northwestern University

**REVIEW**

**GIFTS, MARKETS AND ECONOMIES OF DESIRE IN VIRGINIA WOOLF**


Kathryn Simpson’s book joins the recent trend of framing modernist literature in economic terms—more specifically, within the frame of the gendered and political dimensions of material and immaterial exchange. As the keystone of her argument, Simpson appropriately places Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift* (1925) and other early twentieth-century perspectives on alternatives to patriarchal society and capitalist economies. In and around 1925, Woolf was after all associated with Jane Harrison and Cambridge anthropologists as well as Bloomsbury economic theory and Leonard Woolf’s socialist internationalism. But Simpson focuses on not biographical, although she devotes some attention to the narrative of Woolf’s writing life and publishing history, especially in the first and last chapters, on her essays and short fiction. The focus is less on what Woolf read or thought or did and more in what might be called the gratuitous gestures, the excesses or supplements to a cold, masculine calculus, in the texts Woolf gave us. Nor is Simpson precisely concerned with economic principles, practices, or the history of economics; this is not an interdisciplinary project, as some might expect from her title. She finds confirmation in Woolf, instead, for a concept of “the economic: meaning not merely the monetary economy, but implying economies more broadly and metaphorically” (40). In other words, instead of a thoroughgoing Marxist-materialist study, this is a work of feminist literary criticism that seeks for signs of queer deals and symbolic balance sheets that both mimic and evade real-world transactions.

Thoroughly versed in a range of the essays, short fiction, and novels, Simpson interweaves multiple texts in chapters of close readings. Much as Woolf, in “Street Haunting,” encapsulates the trade of a writer in the experience of walking out to purchase a pencil, Simpson develops what feel like extended metaphors of the gift and the market. She believes in a feminine potential for generosity that somehow avoids the quid pro quo of commerce or the delayed or diverted exchange of the gift (at times she seems to suggest that there is such a thing as a free gift). She acknowledges that “although in brief moments the gift does take on utopian qualities, in Woolf’s writing gift economies are contiguous with market economies,” an interaction that calls on all the resources of “subversive politics” in Woolf’s work (163).

The four main chapters are organized around clusters of texts and to some extent phases of Woolf’s career: the essays (ch. 1); “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street,” *Mrs. Dalloway*, and “The Hours” (ch. 2); *To the Lighthouse, Orlando, and Between the Acts* (ch. 3); and Woolf’s short fiction (ch. 4). The bibliography is oriented toward more recent criticism without being exhaustive (some earlier criticism would have helped her on Woolf’s relation to Jane Harrison and myth, for example), but a substantial range of primary and secondary material is engaged at a professional level in this study. So thoroughly have Woolf’s works been discussed in recent decades that Simpson’s chapters necessarily tread familiar ground. *Gifts, Markets and Economies of Desire* nevertheless offers the value added of presenting an extensive range of Woolf’s writing in every genre, including essays and short fiction as well as unpublished versions, all in the light of gifts as alternatives to patriarchal capitalism. Simpson writes in the “generous, indeterminate style” that she attributes to Woolf (46). The meditative, at times lingering and repetitive, examinations of the works show attention to textual details and cultural contexts as well as a grasp of Woolf’s publishing history.

Now and then the works are rendered schematically as statements in a dualistic feminist argument, for instance in the aside that “A Room of One’s Own” privileges the experience of shopping over that of the battlefield (AROO 70, 86). Without checking the pagination in the British edition (1989) referred to, I would argue that this statement falls wide of the text of *A Room of One’s Own*, however generally true of Woolf’s feminist principle. It can seem unnecessarily laborious to lay out the opposing values and then note their interconnection in Woolf’s subtle works, as in the discussion of *To the Lighthouse*:

> The gendered identities and relations between the sexes are also economically defined, and an important dichotomy in the novel is that of the masculine monetary economy (closely tied to the heterosexual economy) and the feminine (homoerotic) gift economy. However, the novel also demonstrates the interconnection and complexity of apparently simple binary oppositions” (87).

Simpson offers a strong reading of Lily Briscoe’s resistance to “the false gift economy that forces women’s generosity” (103), but that begs the question of the gendered dichotomy between economic modes that Simpson otherwise adheres to. Apparently gift exchange is part and parcel of homoerotic as well as heterosexual, masculine as well as feminine structures in this historical novel, and what of male homoeroticism?

But it would be misleading to suggest that Simpson has not considered many lights in which gendered exchange might be viewed in Woolf’s works. And for the most part a reader consents to Simpson’s perceptive discussions of passages. It is particularly rewarding to read “The Hours” and “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street” “as intertexts for *Mrs. Dalloway*” (71), revealing the subtleties in revisions as well as the parallels among Sally’s gifts at Bourton, a sustained language of flowers, Clarissa’s gifts and homoerotic intimacies with women in shops, and her ambivalence toward Doris Kilman in the novel. Simpson illuminates facets of *Orlando* and *Between the Acts* particularly well in the light of the “gift” of the artist and her or his art. Next to the consideration of the essays, the most original portion of Simpson’s book is the final chapter on the short fiction, a chance to unpack the stories’ treasures and their significance for Woolf as an experimental writer, whether or not they “engage obviously with the giving of gifts” (139). Simpson provides some very helpful reconstruction of literary history surrounding the composition and publication of these works throughout Woolf’s career. Simpson has “read with generosity” all the texts examined in this study, and has elicited the many ways that the gift resonates in the works of Virginia Woolf (164).

Alison Booth  
University of Virginia
REVIEW

TRESPASSING BOUNDARIES: VIRGINIA WOOLF’S SHORT FICTION


Short stories have long been the neglected stepchildren of fictional families. Consider, for example, how few writers have made their careers on the backs of short works. Serious fiction, the thinking seems to go, can only come in the form of a novel.

But one need only think back to Susan Dick’s publication of The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf in 1985 to remember how thrilling it was to read Woolf’s short works together for the first time and to realize how exciting and thought provoking such brief pieces could be. How surprising then that they’ve received relatively little critical attention.1 Yet, this fact makes Trespassing Boundaries: Virginia Woolf’s Short Fiction—the first collection of scholarly essays focusing on the stories—all the more welcome. In this 2004 collection, editors Kathryn N. Benzel and Ruth Hoberman have gathered together ten essays which illuminate Woolf’s short works from a satisfyingly broad range of critical perspectives including historical, political, formal, biographical, cultural materialist, lesbian, and narratological. Despite their diverse critical lenses, all the essays agree that Woolf’s shorter fiction should not be seen as mere throwaways or dress rehearsals for her longer works. Collectively, the essays elegantly argue and convincingly prove, the short stories reward close scrutiny whether one considers them individually, in relation to each other, or in connection to the rest of Woolf’s work.

Although Monday or Tuesday was the only collection she ever published, the fact that Woolf wrote short works throughout her career testifies to the importance of the form to her creative vision. Her admiration for Chekhov’s stories and her thoughtful analysis of the form in her reviews suggests that she saw the genre as promising territory for her own work. Trespassing Boundaries uses a variety of perspectives to illustrate the way Woolf uses the brevity of the form not only to explore the imprint of the external world on human consciousness and the ability of language to capture “moments of being,” but also to tease out questions about the very nature of fiction itself. It is this questioning and exploration, which takes Woolf to the edge of generic boundaries and lures her into trespassing against generic expectations in search of, as the late Julia Briggs writes, quoting Woolf, “the essential thing” (175).2

The Preface by Susan Dick provides a brief overview of the publication history of the short works followed by an Introduction by the editors. The first section of the book called “The Modernist Context” includes a portion of Joanne Trautmann Bank’s 1985 essay describing “the astonishing array of technical skills” (21) Woolf used to capture moments of transcendence in these brief pieces; Nena Skrbic’s excellent analysis of the influence of Chekhov on Woolf’s own short works; Alice Staveley’s exploration of the inescapable link of politics, feminism, form and style in “Kew Gardens”; Krystyna Colburn’s compelling tracing of the lesbian themes and pleasures in the stories; and lastly, Ruth Hoberman’s reconsideration of Woolf’s representations of consumer culture in terms of spectacle, imagination, and modernity.

In the second section entitled “Crossing Generic Boundaries” Beth Rigel Daugherty considers the interconnectedness of the Dalloway stories, Mrs. Dalloway, and To the Lighthouse, and illustrates the fluidity of Woolf’s generic boundaries; Anna Snaith uses Woolf’s interest in biography and life-writing to demonstrate the ways the stories offer vital retellings of women’s lives; Michelle Levy thoughtfully explores Woolf’s sometimes disconcerting focus on nonhuman subjects as focal points in the short pieces; Kathryn N. Benzel uses Woolf’s connection with the arts to illuminate what she calls her “verbal painting” (157); and finally, Julia Briggs focuses on Woolf’s last stories tracing a trajectory of their “sudden intensities” (175) to their final silence.

Scholars will appreciate the detailed readings of these short pieces and the thoughtful use of varied critical lenses to illuminate these often undervalued pieces. Each essay brings new insights and useful information which will inspire critics to see the stories afresh. This volume will be useful, too, for anyone who teaches Woolf. It provides new ways to consider the frequently anthologized pieces—“Kew Gardens” and “Mark on the Wall” for example—but more importantly, it will inspire many to include more of Woolf’s shorter works in their syllabi not as examples of warm-ups for her great novels, but as complex, multivalent and engaging works in their own right.

Danell Jones
University of Montana, Bozeman

Works Cited


Note:
All queries regarding book reviews should be addressed to Karen Levenback at the email address above.

Errata
in Virginia Woolf Miscellany, 74 (Fall/Winter 2008)

Maggie Humm spotted her uncorrected proof error in ‘Flush, or “Who Was the Woman in the Photograph?”’(13-14). Pinka (Pinker) was, of course, female not male.

In Vara Neverow’s review of Bonnie Kime Scott’s Gender in Modernism, the place and publisher are incorrectly cited (29). The volume was published by the University of Illinois Press in Urbana, IL—not by “Illinois University Press in Bloomington, IN.”

In Karen Levenback’s review Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press: From the Collection of William Beekman Exhibit and This Perpetual Fight: Love and Loss in Virginia Woolf’s Intimate Circle as well as the Grolier Club exhibit itself, there is an error on page 33: “12 April 137” should be “12 April 1937.”

Karen Levenback’s correct email address is <klevenback@worldnet.att.net>. Note: All queries regarding book reviews should be addressed to Karen Levenback at the email address above.
How to Join
The International Virginia Woolf Society
<http://www.utoronto.ca/IVWS>

To join the International Virginia Woolf Society, or to update your membership, please use one of the following options:

To purchase or update a membership manually:
Download the Membership Form (.pdf file—Adobe Acrobat required), from the IVWS website, fill it out, and send it in to the address provided with your dues.

You may also purchase or update your membership or make a donation to the IVWS using PayPal online at the IVWS website

Regular membership:
a 12-month membership ($20)
a 5-year membership ($95)

Student or not full-time employed membership:
12-month membership ($10)
5-year membership ($47)

Members of the Society receive a free subscription to the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, the Woolf Society Newsletter, an annual Bibliography of Woolf Scholarship, and an annual updated list of members (available online in a password protected .pdf format—the password is provided in the IVWS newsletter. Those members who have e-mail addresses are also included in a distribution list that provides early notification of special events, electronic balloting, and electronic versions of the newsletters.

In addition, members receive early notification of the Annual Woolf Conferences, and information about other events and publications of interest to readers of Woolf.

Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain
Membership
<www.virginiawoolfsociety.co.uk/vw_membership.htm>

Membership of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain entitles you to three free issues annually of the Virginia Woolf Bulletin, and the opportunity to attend member-only events such as:

- Birthday Lecture*
- AGM with guest speaker
- Summer Study Day*
- Reading Group meetings

(*There is a charge for events marked with an asterisk.)

Subscriptions for the year ending 31 December 2009 are £16.00 UK and £21.00 overseas (US$ 42.00). Five-year memberships beginning in 2009 are £64.00 UK and £84 overseas (US$ 168.00).

We are always delighted to welcome new members. If you wish to join the VWSGB and pay in pounds sterling, please write to or email Stuart N. Clarke for a membership form:

Membership Secretary
Fairhaven
Charnleys Lane
Banks
SOUTHPORT PR9 8HJ

For members paying in US dollars, please write to or email Lynn Todd-Crawford for a membership form:

Ms Lynn Todd-Crawford
566 Lakeshore Drive
Atlanta
GA 30307
USA

If you are interested in details of student, five-year or life membership, please write (as above) or email the Membership Secretary—Stuart.N.Clarke@btinternet.com
On behalf of all the members of the IVWS, I want to begin by thanking Anne Fernald, along with her incredible staff of volunteers, for organizing and hosting the 2009 19th Annual International Virginia Woolf Conference. Fordham University, Lincoln Center welcomed us from all over the world to present, discuss, and hobnob about Virginia Woolf and the City. In her 1918 diary (12 October), Woolf writes that “the rich weeks always tend to pass unrecorded,” and, like a “rich week,” many rich moments at the conference will also, here, “pass unrecorded,” especially those rich moments in the small panels. But together we all experienced incredible plenary sessions, with lectures by Tamar Katz, Anna Snaith, Rebecca Solnit, and Jessica Berman, and with a conversation among Ruth Gruber, Susan Sellers, and Kris Lundberg, facilitated by Katherine Lanpher. The lunches, coffee hours, and banquet helped us all mingle and meet, continuing the discussions. The silent auction benefited Girls Write Now. Many visited the Berg collection under the guidance of curator Isaac Gewirtz. “Vita and Virginia,” starring Alison Fraser, was riveting, as was the performance by the Stephen Pelton Dance Theatre. And Manhattan itself—what a setting!

While the conference is not a function of the International Virginia Woolf Society, each year the conference organizers set aside a time for the annual Society business meeting. As usual, we held the meeting for an hour at 8 a.m. on Friday. One of our experiments next June (June 3-6, 2010 in Georgetown, Kentucky, during the conference being organized by Kristin Czarnecki, Virginia Woolf and the Natural World) will be to schedule the business meeting for a lunch hour, rather than 8 a.m. We also hope to convene for two hours next year, rather than the one. This year, despite the early hour, about twenty of us met to discuss pressing issues.

Please see the Summer 2009 IVWS newsletter (by our Vice-President, Madelyn Detloff) for the minutes, but here are some highlights.

First, I have great pleasure in announcing that we have a logo! IVWS members had an extremely close vote among six entries, and chose Melba Cuddy-Keane’s design. Here it is! at the top of this column! Thank you, Melba!

Second, we discussed how to facilitate membership sign-up and dues payments. We already have PayPal for dues, but some members have had troubles with the system. And we now have a five-year option! Please see the website (www.utoronto.ca/IWS) for information. We also discussed how best to use email and Web systems. As I write, already Madelyn has set up a Facebook Virginia Woolf site.

Third, we should all please send citations of our articles and books published this year to Celia Marshik, our Historian/Bibliographer (e-mail below). She is putting together the annual bibliography. And Karen Levenback presented vital information about Woolf Society archives; we will have a Society-wide vote on whether or not to add the role of Archival Liaison in order not to lose these records.

We also discussed, in this difficult financial time, how to use our dues to support the Virginia Woolf Miscellany. While the Society does not control the Miscellany in any way, receiving this vital publication is part of our membership, and the Society will continue to support the journal. And Thaine Stearns, our Secretary/Treasurer brought a number of issues to our attention as we move to nonprofit status.

Many thanks, Madelyn, Celia, and Thaine for all your work!

Looking ahead, the Society will sponsor two panels at the Philadelphia MLA, and one panel at the University of Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900, in Louisville, Kentucky (February 18-20, 2010). The call for papers has gone out for the Louisville panel: submit by email a cover page with name, email address, mailing address, phone number, professional affiliation, and title of paper, and a second page containing a 250-word proposal to Kristin Czarnecki at Kristin_Czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu by Sunday, September 13, 2009.

The 2009 MLA panels in December in Philadelphia (see also page 2) will be:Twenty-First Century Woolf, arranged and chaired by Elizabeth Outka. This panel will explore Woolf’s continued relevance in and for the new century, with these four presentations:

Patrick Nugent, “For There It Was”: Visions of a Sustainable City in Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway”;
Laura Green, “‘Private Ancestor’ and Postmodern Publication: Jeanette Winterson’s Virginia Woolf”;
Tracy Lemaster, “Girls, the Woman Writer, and Third Wave Feminism in A Room of One’s Own”; and
Jonathan Readey, “Resistant Commemoration: Mrs. Dalloway as Precursor to Twenty-First-Century Memorials.”

The Uses of Illness: Virginia Woolf and Medical Narrative, arranged and chaired by David Eberly, will explore narrative strategies Woolf deploys to explore illness, including the physical, psychological, social, and ethical—with these three presentations:

Rita Charon, “‘A Sublime Complacency’: Religio Medici, or Treating the Visionary’s Peril”;
Michelle Ty, “Facing Illness: Rethinking Ethics from Virginia Woolf’s Bedside”; and
Marcia Day Childress, “Illness and Metaphor: Virginia Woolf’s Illness Experience and the Motive for Metaphor.”

Also, in Philadelphia, Alison Lewis has graciously offered her home as the site of the MLA Society Party! Thank you Alison! Watch for directions and instructions. Everyone is welcome.

Georgia Johnston
President, IVWS

Officers:
Georgia Johnston, President: <johnstfk@shu.edu>
Madelyn Detloff, Vice-President: <detlofmm@muohio.edu>
Thaine Stearns, Secretary-Treasurer: <stearnst@sonoma.edu>
Celia Marshik, Historian-Bibliographer: <cmarshik@notes.cc.sunysb.edu>

Members-at-Large:
Annemarie Bantzinger: <ambantzinger@hotmail.com>
Kristin Czarnecki: <Kristin_Czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu>
Anne Ryan Hanafin: <anr@encsols.com>
Alice Lowe: <alicelowe88@yahoo.com>