To the Readers: Woolf and Periodicals

In a 2008 article in PMLA, Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz surveyed recent trends in the study of modernism, and identified a significant thread of studies that “locate literary modernism in an arena transformed by media’s capacity to disseminate words and images in less time, across greater distances, and to greater numbers of people than ever before” (743). Within this trend, whose broader conception of media would include such practices as propaganda (for instance Mark Wollaeger’s Modernism, Media, and Propaganda) and radio broadcasting (Todd Avery’s BBC Modernism), lies the increasingly fertile field of “periodical studies.” This field is characterized by an insistence on viewing the periodical, magazine, or newspaper as an artifact worthy of study in its own right, via all the techniques that “study” suggests (e.g., close reading, rhetorical analysis, historical contextualization, archival exploration, and any number or combination of theoretical approaches). Sean Latham and Robert Scholes in 2006, also in PMLA, traced what they call a “Rise of Periodical Studies,” driven in part by “the cultural turn in departments of English” and “the development of digital archives that allow for such studies on a broader scale than ever before” (517). While there has unquestionably been an increase in work and interest on periodicals in studies of twentieth-century literature and culture, especially on periodicals besides the long-central little magazines, the “Rise of Periodical Studies” took place considerably earlier among scholars of nineteenth-century literature: as Latham and Scholes note, Victorian Periodicals Review was founded in 1979, and continued the predecessor Victorian Periodicals Newsletter. The Victorianists’ work, particularly their immersion in the theoretical and methodological problems of placing periodicals at the center of English, remains essential to scholars now working in early-twentieth-century periodical studies. This subfield shows no sign of slowing down. The 2009 Modernist Studies Association conference saw no fewer than seven panels primarily or substantially focusing on periodicals, and a journal dedicated to such efforts—the Journal of Modern Periodical Studies, supported by Penn State and edited by Latham and Mark Morrisson, is due to debut in 2010.

1 Key texts include Laurel Brake, Subjugated Knowledges (NYU, 1994); Brake, Aled Jones, and Lionel Madden, Investigating Victorian Journalism (Palgrave-Macmillan, 1990), particularly essays by Margaret Beetham and Lynn Pykett; Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein, Nineteenth Century Media and the Construction of Identities (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2000).

fascination for scholars, more work that examines their initial settings is sure to follow.

Perhaps the greatest boon an emphasis on periodicals offers Woolf scholars is the access it provides to the vast array of cultural conversations in which Woolf was interested and engaged—not least among these contemporary debates about journalism itself. Woolf’s essays and book reviews, along with her status as a publisher in her own right, necessarily engaged her in the widespread cultural discussion of print culture, free speech, democracy, the public sphere, and the future of literature, issues vigorously explored in Melba Cuddy-Keane’s *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 2003), Anna Snait’s *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003), and Christine Froula’s *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* (Columbia, 2005). Woolf scholars had long used periodicals as repositories of raw material for the “thick descriptions” (in Clifford Geertz’s durable, methodological phrase) of cultural context so current in English studies today. Cuddy-Keane, Snait, and Froula take as their primary subject the sphere of public discourse in which periodical publishing was arguably the most important material practice. These studies thus anticipate a more recent turn in studies of Woolf and media—the aspect of such study that is “making new” both Woolf studies and studies of modernism more broadly: the foregrounding of media itself, the use of media artifacts such as newspapers and magazines not primarily as sources of data but as objects of study meriting as much, perhaps more, attention than the “primary texts” of Woolf and her contemporaries. One can sense this turn developing in Pamela Caughie’s 2000 collection *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Garland), in which Woolf is more often used as a lens for understanding media (gramophones, film, British *Vogue*) than the other way around.

The five essays on Woolf and periodicals published here represent an array of the possibilities opened up by foregrounding periodicals as a lens for studying Woolf (or vice versa). Beth Rigel Daugherty does great bibliographic service to the community of Woolf scholars by identifying and characterizing the Woolf essays that appeared only in the United States. She then uses her survey to posit a new explanation for American scholars’ interest in Woolf in the 1970s: perhaps American academics recognized Woolf as a theorist and critic more quickly than British scholars because American readers had experienced a different Woolf than British readers. Eric Sandberg revisits the much-discussed issue of self-censorship in Woolf’s journalism, finding that Woolf’s early editors were considerably less censorious than Woolf claimed in her famous evocation of the “Angel in the House.” In Sandberg’s and Daugherty’s essays, the primary focus remains on Virginia Woolf, and her interactions with periodicals are used to offer new takes on long-standing issues in Woolf criticism. Kaplan’s essay occupies something of a middle ground in this essay, focusing on Woolf’s interaction with a single periodical (the *Athenaeum* under John Middleton Murry) as a way of shedding light on an early period in Woolf’s career and on a productive but vexed set of professional relationships.

In contrast, the essays by Huculak and Wood place substantial emphasis on individual periodicals (the *London Mercury* and the *Daily Worker*, respectively), and the insight generated falls substantially on the periodical itself and/or on its place in the wider culture. Huculak is interested in exploring the category of the middlebrow, and his attention to Woolf’s interaction with the *Mercury* reveals that the monthly is better described as a “high-middlebrow” or “low-highbrow” artifact. The *Mercury*, Huculak argues, upheld its own specific literary values and served as a site of articulation for the “aspirations to cultural distinction of its educated readership.” Huculak finds Woolf’s disdain (and that of other high moderns) for the *Mercury* to be more a matter of rhetorical self-positioning than an accurate reflection of the magazine’s cultural function. Wood finds a number of nuances in Woolf’s “Why Art To-Day Follows Politics” by reading it in the communist *Daily Worker*, its initial site of appearance: she notes that the essay’s muted emphasis on the ideal disinterestedness of the artist jars with the *Worker*’s overall message—a dissonance that the paper’s editors felt it necessary to address in an editors’ note—while its uncharacteristic silence on the question of British intervention in Spain probably owes itself to the paper’s strident pro-interventionist stance. While these interpretive nuances are valuable in themselves, I find equally interesting the details Wood provides of the relationship between the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Artists International Association, and the insight all of this gives us into what Wood calls “the political climate of the latter months of 1936.”

Wood and Huculak are among a growing number of graduate students whose dissertation work is making new and exciting use of periodicals considerably less familiar to scholars than the *Egoist or Blast!* or even the *Nation or TLS*. Latham and Scholes are right to assert that the currency of periodical studies owes much to the availability of digital archives, but it is noteworthy that both Wood and Huculak have done their work on original copies of periodicals to which they have access at their universities. A further attraction to scholars lies in periodicals, an attraction beyond those outlined by Latham and Scholes or Mao and Walkowitz: periodicals constitute a virtually inexhaustible and predominantly untapped archive, a powerful lure to young scholars, particularly those interested in an author with as voluminous a secondary literature as Woolf. It is difficult to come up with a new and fresh thesis on *Mrs. Dalloway*, difficult, bordering on impossible, even to read all of the criticism on the novel. Interpreting periodicals poses formidable challenges, but a surplus of secondary criticism is not one of them. In-depth work on a magazine or newspaper can offer the pleasure of knowing that your eyes are the first to see a given page in a long while, and that what you find there will likely be new to a large majority of your potential audience. I would argue, finally, that the study of early twentieth-century literature and culture requires a lot more empirical information on, and a continued, vigorous theoretical discussion of, how periodicals functioned in the early twentieth century; we need to conceptualize how newspapers and magazines spoke to each other and how they framed and engaged in dialogue with Woolf’s (and other) texts; we need exemplars of how to interpret and work with periodicals. We need all of these things more urgently than we need innovative interpretations of canonical novels. The essays in this issue give us a snapshot of the scholarly rewards that lie in wait.

**Patrick Collier**

**Ball State University**

**Works Cited**


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THE LOUISVILLE CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE
AND CULTURE SINCE 1900
February 18-20, 2010
D-5 Virginia Woolf: Presence, Absence, and Authority
Friday, February 19—10:45 - 12:15 pm
Daniel V. Facchinetti, University of Rhode Island
“Absence/Presence: Virginia Woolf and Authorial Subjectivity”
Margaret Sullivan, Saint Louis University
“Queer Absence and Religious Institutionality in Virginia Woolf’s The Waves”
David Wanczyk, Ohio University
“So They Fidgeted’: The Anti-Fascist Twitch of Woolf’s Between the Acts”
Megan Holt, Tulane University
“What’s History without the Army, Eh? Virginia Woolf and Historiography”

MLA 2009—Philadelphia
125th MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION MEETING
PANELS
Monday, 28 December
192. The Uses of Illness: Virginia Woolf and Medical Narrative, organized and chaired by David Eberly
12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Philadelphia Marriott
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, organized and chaired by Elizabeth Outka
12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Philadelphia Marriott
1. “‘Private Ancestor’ and Postmodern Publication: Jeannette 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 Lernaster, 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

IVWS PARTY
In between these panels we had our annual Party! Alison Lewis graciously offered her home as the site. Thank you Alison! The Party was on Tuesday, 29 December, beginning at 6 p.m.—and was a great success.

MLA 2011
126th MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION
Los Angeles, CA, 6-9 January
CFPs
MLA has changed its policies regarding Allied Organizations of which IVWS is one. (Please see page 32 for more information about the new policies.) The 2011 MLA line up is as follows:


2. Our proposed panel is “Sartorial Bloomsbury.” For Bloomsbury, how does clothing function as social coding—for self-fashioning, sexual ambiguity, performance, the avant-garde, even of emancipatory politics? How does fashion shape our understanding of modernity? Abstracts of 500 words due March 12, 2010, to Jane Garrity <Jane.Garrity@Colorado.edu>.

3. The International James Joyce Foundation and the IVWS also submitted a panel proposal, “Dirt, Desire, Recollection: James Joyce/ Virginia Woolf.” The IJJF and IVWS seek work on Joyce and Woolf individually for combined panel. Send Woolf to Johnston at <johnstgk@slu.edu> and Joyce to Fogarty at <anne.fogarty@ucd.ie>.

Did you know?
The International Virginia Woolf Society is on Facebook!
And check out “Blogging Woolf”<http://bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com/>. This fabulous website and blog, created and maintained by Paula Maggio, offers a broad range of information such as Woolfian resources, current and upcoming events, and an archive of Woolfian doings now past.

Come 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 who is interested in receiving this index or has any questions about the index should contact Susan Devoe at <svmindex@gmail.com>.

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>

This conference highlights the many aspects of nature that inspired Virginia Woolf’s life and writing. Please consider proposing a paper, panel, workshop, or reading. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2010. Independent scholars, high school teachers, and “common readers” are encouraged to submit. For paper proposals, please send a 250-word abstract as a Word attachment. For panel proposals, please submit a 250-word description of each paper to be presented by each of the three panel participants along with the proposed panel title. As this is a blind submission process, please do not include your name on your abstract. In your email, please include your name(s), institutional affiliation (if any), paper title(s), and contact information. Submit proposals by e-mail to: <woolf@georgetowncollege.edu>.

Conference organizer: Kristin Czarnecki, Assistant Professor of English, Georgetown College, 400 E. College St., Georgetown, KY 40324.

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
- Nature as Restorative
- Nature as Punitive
- City “versus” Nature
- Woolf and Ecology
- Woolf and the Environment
- Teaching Woolf and Nature
- Vacations
- Country Homes and Estates
- Farmers and Farming
- Hiking
- Sailing
- Hunting
- Prehistory
A Room of Their Own: The Artists of Bloomsbury in American Collections

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.


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

A Brief Overview of Resources for Woolfians

The Virginia Woolf Miscellany is an independent publication, which has been hosted by Southern Connecticut State University since 2003. Founded in 1973 by J. J. Wilson, the publication was hosted by Sonoma State University for 30 years. The publication has always received some additional funding from the International Virginia Woolf Society.

The Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf is an independent entity. It was envisioned by Mark Hussey and launched in 1991 at Pace University. The conference is overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of all previous conference organizers. Permission to host a Woolf conference is authorized by Mark Hussey, who chairs the Steering Committee. Those interested in hosting the conference should contact Mark Hussey at mhussey@pace.edu. Each annual conference is organized by one or more individuals associated with the host institution. The host institution finances the event and uses the registration fees of attendees to offset the costs of the event. The Annual Conference has no formal association with the International Virginia Woolf Society or the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain or any other Woolf society.

The Selected Papers of the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf 2001-present (excluding 2004) are published by Clemson University Digital Press under the auspices of Wayne Chapman. The editors of the publication vary from year to year. Electronic versions of the selected papers from 2001-present, including selected works from 2004, are available on the Center for Woolf Studies website at <http://www.csusb.edu/woolf_center/> (a subscription is required to access the materials).

The Selected Papers of the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf 1991-2000, launched by Mark Hussey in conjunction with the conference, were published by Pace University Press under his auspices. While early volumes of the papers are out of print, a number of the more recent ones are still available from the press (see <http://www.pace.edu/press/>).

The IVWS was founded in 1973 as the VWS. The society has a direct relationship with the Modern Language Association and has had the privilege of organizing two sessions at the annual MLA Convention. MLA is currently in transition in regard to the annual convention. In the new model, the IVWS will continue to have one guaranteed session.

The IVWS website is hosted by the University of Toronto. The website was founded by Melba Cuddy-Keane, Past President of the International Virginia Woolf Society, who continues to oversee the site (<http://www.utoronto.ca/IVWS/>).

The VV Woolf Listserv is hosted by the University of Ohio. The list administrator is Anne Fernald. The founder of the list is Morris Beja. To join the list, you need to send a message to the following address: <listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu>. In the body of the email, you must write: subscribe VWOOLF Your firstname Your last name. You will receive a welcome message with further information about the list. To unsubscribe, please send a message "from the exact account that you originally subscribed with" to the same address: <listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu>. In the body of the email, write: unsubscribe VWOOLF.

Materials from most of these sources mentioned above are included in the IVWS/VWS archive at University of Toronto even though they are entities separate from the Society itself. Individuals who have materials that may be of archival significance should consult Karen Levenback at <ivwsarchive@att.net>.
All publishers, authors and scholars should direct inquiries regarding books to Karen Levenback at <klevenback@worldnet.att.net>

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 <neverowv1@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 the style of the 6th edition of the MLA Handbook (not the 2009 edition).

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/F51ivwoolfoundationfonds.htm>

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Karen Levenback, Past President of the VWS; Melba Cuddy-Keane, Past President of the IVWS; and Carmen Königssreuther 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>
Call for Papers:
Belief and Disbelief in the Space Between, 1914-1945
Proposals requested for the 12th Annual Conference of
The Space Between Society:
Literature and Culture, 1914-1945
University of Portland
Portland, Oregon
June 17-19, 2010
Keynote Speaker: Gauri Viswanathan
Class of 1933 Professor in the Humanities, Columbia University
Author of Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief (1998)
The Interwar years have often been regarded as a period of secularization, disillusionment, and disenchantment, yet many of the period’s cultural productions engage questions of faith, belief, and spirituality. This interdisciplinary conference invites literary and cultural critics, historians, and scholars of modern religion and philosophy to explore a range of topics relating to the collision of belief and disbelief in the years between 1914 and 1945.

Possible topics include:
- Religious themes and traditions in the arts and popular culture
- The impact of war on faith and the apprehension of the unseen
- New conceptions of the sacred and the profane
- The rise of faith-infused nationalisms
- Political propaganda as secular dogma
- Artistic representations of the supernatural or the fantastic
- Aesthetic principles informed by belief or disbelief
- The public and private dimensions of faith and doubt
- Disillusionment in traditional institutions
- The coexistence of magic and science
- The role of class, gender, and/or ethnicity in religious identification
- Engagement with non-Western religions and those crossing cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries

Please send 300-word abstract and one-page CV to: Genevieve Brassard <Brassard@up.edu>. Deadline for submission: January 15, 2010.

Call for Papers:
Woolf contemporaine / A Contemporary Woolf
Colloque de la Société d’Etudes Woolfiennes,
à Aix-en-Provence (Université d’Aix-Marseille I),
18-19 septembre 2010

“On or about December 1910, human character changed”: one century after this new beginning, we invite you to reflect on Virginia Woolf’s relation to the contemporary, and on how she is inscribed in time, and in her time, “being that which we are, that which we have made, that in which we live” (“How It Strikes a Contemporary”, 1925).

If being contemporary means not abiding by the strictures of the present, but rather, as Giorgio Agamben maintains in his essay «What is the Contemporary?» grasping the meaning of one’s time from outside, what does this imply about Woolf’s contemporaneity, both in terms of her own era, and in terms of our present? To what extent does her fictional as well as non-fictional work reflect on or engage with those forms of untimeliness or out-of-timeliness which enable an author to «see its shadows» or «perceive its obscurity»?

Our principle aim will be to explore the ways in which Woolf conceives of modernity. How do her texts display an awareness of the barbarity as well as of the culture of her century? How do they relate the present to the past and the future? And how might we today be «contemporaries» of her texts, and see in them figurations of our own century, our own times? How can we as readers define those moments in the text when Woolf’s writing becomes contemporary now, and as such generates works to come?

These are some of the questions which can incite us to reflect on Virginia Woolf’s contemporaneity at the same time as we contemplate our own.

Considering Woolf as a contemporary implies thinking about history outside chronological sequence and positing the present as a crossroads between epochs, between generations—in other words conceiving the present caught in the tension of temporalities as Woolf describes it at the end of her essay “How it Strikes a Contemporary”: “scan the horizon; see the past in relation to the future; and so prepare the way for masterpieces to come.”

Papers can be given in French or English. Submissions (up to 250 words) should be addressed to: Claire Davison-Pégon <davisonpegon@gmail.com> or Anne-Marie Smith-Di Biasio <Amdibiasio@neuf.fr> by January 15, 2010.

A final answer will be sent out by March 15, 2010.
To the Readers

Patrick Collier

Events and Announcements

MLA 2009 Panels and Party

MLA 2011 CFPs

Panel for Louisville 2010

The IVWS is now on Facebook

Check out “Blogging Woolf” by Paula Maggio

Announcement: Index to the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, Compiled by Susan Devoe (forthcoming)

Thanking the IVWS for Supporting the VWM

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A Certain Phantom: Virginia Woolf’s Eric Sandberg

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Virginia Woolf and the Athenaeum Sydney Janet Kaplan

Meddling Middlebrows: Matthew Huculak

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Reading the Skies in Virginia Woolf: Woolf on Weather in Her Essays, Diaries and Three of Her Novels by Paula Maggio.

A History of Monks House and the Village of Rodmell by Julie Singleton.


Reviews:

Karen Levenback

Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich.


Review:

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Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf by Gabrielle McIntire.

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Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Writing by Wendy Gan.

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Courtney Carter

Vanessa and Virginia by Susan Sellers.

Review:

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Teaching Beauty in Delillo, Woolf, and Merrill by Jennifer Green-Lewis and Margaret Soltan.

Promotional: Selected Papers and Woolf Studies Annual

How to Join the International Virginia Woolf Society

How to Join the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain

The Society Column Georgia Johnston

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The Transatlantic Virginia Woolf: Essaying an American Audience

On 22 December 1937, Lyn Newman wrote to Virginia Woolf from Princeton, telling her she should come to America: “Virginia, you would get a tremendous welcome, you are much read & appreciated” (qtd. in Daugherty 154). The fan mail from the U.S. bears her out. For example, a 23-year-old public school teacher wrote on 6 February 1935 that she was “propped up in bed reading you again.” Alluding to *A Room of One’s Own* and several novels and essays, the letter writer reveals her wide Woolf reading, expressing hope that Woolf’s next book will be out soon, and asks “I wonder if your English public prizes you as much as we Americans do?” (qtd. in Daugherty 138–40). In his preface to the 1979 Virginia Woolf issue of *Twentieth Century Literature*, Lucio Ruotolo quoted this question and thus captured that moment in reception history when the Woolf revival in the United States was underway and we Americans were wondering why the English weren’t as excited as we were.

Various explanations for the different reception histories have been put forward, but one possibility may lie not just in the attitudes of different cultures and readers, but also in the different Virginia Woolfs contemporary audiences read. Although Woolf’s major works were published nearly simultaneously in England and the United States from 1922 on, readers on the two sides of the Atlantic did not read identical texts. American readers also experienced Woolf’s thought through significantly different sets of essays.

Of the essays now attributed to Virginia Woolf, readers on both sides of the Atlantic had close to 90 of them in common, essays published in the same versions at or near the same time in periodicals or in the two *Common Readers*. English readers had a canon of approximately 640 essays, whereas American readers had only one-sixth of that, around 110. But throughout her career, Woolf’s essays in *TLS* were unsigned, and through the end of 1928, most of her essays published elsewhere in the U.K. were also unsigned. In contrast, all of Woolf’s essays in the U.S. carried her signature, including a couple of reprints of pieces written as Virginia Stephen. American common readers, then, could match Woolf with her thought much earlier.

Approximately 550 of Woolf’s essays were published only in England during her lifetime, and 19 essays appeared only in the U.S. For example, “Miss Ormerod,” published in the *Dial* and then in the American edition of the first *Common Reader*, was not published in the English edition of the same book; English readers did not have easy access to this essay until 1984, when Andrew McNeillie included it in his annotated edition. When Isabel Forbes Milton wishes Woolf “had to fetch lead pencils more often” in her letter, she’s referring to “Street Haunting,” an essay American readers could read in 1927 but that English readers would not see until the 1942 posthumous publication of *Death of the Moth* (Daugherty 138). These nineteen essays, published in nine different venues, may partially explain why Americans have seen Woolf differently from the beginning: they introduced a more “American,” feminist/pacifist, and theoretical Woolf to a wide, varied, and less class-bound audience, thus paving the way for the 1970s renewal, the 1982 centennial celebration in Virginia, and the American view of Woolf as a “genuinely radical thinker and a feminist iconoclast” (Briggs xxiii).

The nineteen essays published only in the United States appeared in nine periodicals: *Atlantic Monthly*, *Bookman*, *Dial*, *Forum*, *Hearts’ International Combined with Cosmopolitan*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Herald Tribune Books* supplement to the Sunday edition, *Saturday Review of Literature*, and the *Yale Review*. Representing a wide variety of American periodicals at the time, these outlets gave Virginia Woolf both a broad American readership and much more money (Lee 551). They range from weekly to quarterly, from small circulation to large, from still with us to defunct; physically, they range in size from quarto to folio and from 24 pages to 250; politically, they range from a supporter of consumerism and capitalism on the right to a liberal critique of business and government on the left with a couple in between that presented open debates on current issues. Though some are more regional than others, all attempted to reach a national audience. More important, they reached a variety of Americans. True, Virginia Woolf was not appearing in *True Confessions*, the magazine Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Rowena Wyant chose to represent the lowest cultural group in their 1937 study of “Magazines in 90 Cities—Who Reads What?” but the Hearst *Cosmopolitan* might be called “lowbrow,” Joan Shelley Rubin sees the *New York Herald Tribune Books* supplement as “middlebrow” (xxvi), *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Yale Review* reached “highbrow” audiences, but not exclusively, so that the *Atlantic Monthly* was considered “merely middle-brow” by the *New Republic* (Tebbel and Zuckerman 203) and both were sneered at by the *Dial* (Whittmer 45)! All nine periodicals assumed Virginia Woolf would be of interest to their readers, and together, they allowed Woolf to reach many and varied portions of the U.S. reading population.

In the nineteen essays published only in the United States, Woolf writes as a reviewer (reviewing, for example, E. M. Forster’s novels, Gladys B. Stern’s *A Deputy Was King*, Ernest Hemingway’s *Men Without Women*, and Harold Nicolson’s *Some People*); as a familiar essayist (“Miss Ormerod,” “Street Haunting,” “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid”); and as a literary historian (“Poetry, Fiction and the Future,” “Not One of Us” on Shelley). But she also plays more unfamiliar roles, such as when she comments on Walter Edwin Peck’s scholarship in his biography of Shelley or on R. W. Lewis’s footnotes in his edition of Horace Walpole’s *Correspondence* (“Two Antiquaries”). Or when she responds as an invited guest to select the books she liked during the winter for the spring announcement number of the *New York Herald Tribune Books* section (“Preferences of Four Critics”). But the Woolf who emerges in these three other roles—“American” critic, feminist/pacifist, and theorist—sowed the seeds for her 1970s American renewal.

Woolf not only introduced the English to her American readers through essays such as “Miss Ormerod” and “Street Haunting,” but she also took on the role of an “American” critic, interpreting America and American literature, albeit from an outsider’s perspective. Often perceptive—Woolf understands that Walt Whitman, baseball, and the coining of new words convey something essential about the democratic nature of the upstart United States—and sometimes delightfully wacky and even prescient—in 1938, she sees us owning cars, traveling abreast in 60-70 lanes at 90 mph, and pushing springs to reveal “whole meal[s] ready to be eaten” in a refrigerator (“America” 58)—Woolf gives us a picture of ourselves in “American Fiction,” “An Essay in Criticism,” “The American Language,” “America, which I have never seen,” and even in “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid.” In the last she poignantly hopes American men and women, because they have yet to have their sleep “broken by machine-gun fire,” will “rethink” her thoughts on peace into something “serviceable” (Collected Essays 4: 176-77).

Woolf’s visibility in the U.S. was enhanced in 1927 when Irita Van Doren, editor of the Sunday *New York Herald Tribune Books* supplement, asked Woolf to be guest editor for October. As a result, she had to “drive my pen through one article after another—Hemingway, Morgan, Shelley; & now Biography” (Diary 3: 157-58). In “American
right at home in March 1929 forum: William Allan Neilson, President of Smith College, had argued there in February that women should be educated like men, and Dr. W. Béran Wolfe argued in March that it was time for co-education because the sexes’ intellectual equality was now beyond argument. Woolf’s pacifist “Women Must Weep” debuted in an Atlantic Monthly issue whose cover features Europe’s map outlined in white on a red background, with “Hitler Over Europe” stamped over the titles and authors of articles inside. “Women and Fiction” and “Women Must Weep” are drastically condensed and straightforward versions of A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas.4 “Women and Fiction” appeared in March 1929 and A Room of One’s Own was published in late October; “Women Must Weep” appeared in May and June of 1938, and Three Guineas was not published in the U.S. until late August, whereas it had appeared in England in early June. In contrast to the small audiences of women who had heard the original talks in England, then, potentially large audiences of women and men in the U.S. had inexpensive versions of Woolf’s feminist and pacifist arguments months before the book-length and more complex, literary arguments appeared.

It seems likely that “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,” the last essay of Woolf’s to appear in the U.S. during her lifetime, was inspired by a foment of responses to Woolf’s writing from American editors and readers in the wake of Three Guineas. A letter from Phyllis Moir at Forum on 17 November 1939 asked Woolf if she was ready “to boil over” and write about women and peace (Letters from editors). Woolf was thinking about doing so and asked to pick Shena Simon’s brain about “our next task,” the “emancipation of man” (L6 379). On 14 May 1940 Motier Harris Fisher wrote a long letter about a symposium to be held in New York in November about American women over the past hundred years; accompanying the symposium would be a book including contributions “from many obscure writers and from women who are not writers at all.” She invited Woolf to write on a topic of her own choosing for the book, but did suggest that “since small groups of women in various parts of the United States have read your Three Guineas, they would be interested in knowing whether its analysis of a constructive attitude of women toward peace in time of peace still seems valid in wartime” (Daugherty 175). In addition to the voluminous correspondence from U.S. readers about Three Guineas, Woolf saved two letters about “Women Must Weep.” The first of these came from a Quaker woman in McAllen, Texas, who wrote “you must keep up the education against the "blighting curse of Commercialism, Competition and Greed" that is bred into "innocent babes," the second from a woman in Brooklyn who was awake at 4 in the morning hoping Woolf would “reach down among the daughters and men of uneducated folks” to “tell us how we can help make the world a safe place to live in” (Daugherty 157-59). No matter the specific impetus, “Thoughts of Peace in an Air Raid” seems to have been a response to American women who felt strongly enough about Woolf’s views to write to her about them; she had hit a nerve. No wonder American feminist critics would later quarrel with Leonard Woolf and Quentin Bell’s assessment of Woolf as apolitical.

Finally, American readers saw Virginia Woolf practicing as a theorist in these essays: “Poetry, Fiction and the Future”; two pieces on biography, one on Lytton Strachey and the other on Harold Nicolson; “Life and the Novelist,” a review about the balance between observation and craft; and “Phases of Fiction,” which appeared in three numbers of The Bookman in 1929. This extended theoretical piece, covering six types of novelist, is, as Anne Fernald points out, “a theory of the novel based on the pleasure of reading” (193) and Woolf’s contribution to a conversation about the art of fiction that Percy Lubbock, E. M. Forster, and others were having at the time. Adding this essay and “Poetry, Fiction and the

3 Every effort has been made to locate the copyright holders for the letters to Virginia Woolf used in this essay. I want to thank the Special Collections staff for its help and the Library at the University of Sussex, as owner of these letters, for its permission to publish these extracts.

4 See Naomi Black on the nature of the differences between “Women Must Weep” and Three Guineas.

5 Although this essay grew out of a talk some Oxford undergraduates heard, it was not published in the UK during Woolf’s lifetime.
Future” to essays printed on both sides of the Atlantic, “Modern Fiction,” “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” and “How Should One Read a Book?,” Americans could see Woolf carefully constructing a theory that not only explains her own and others’ modern fiction, but also understands, welcomes, and “places” other kinds of fiction.

The Bookman context highlights the theoretical nature of “Phases of Fiction,” juxtaposing it in April with a piece on Ellen Glasgow and the South and a series about authors’ works called “History of Their Books”; the May issue contains a “History of Their Books” entry on Fannie Hurst, Rebecca West’s London letter, and a piece on Sarah Orne Jewett; June’s issue features André Malraux discussing a biographer’s difficulty in weighing historical evidence, letters from Joseph Conrad and Stephen Crane, and a review of Nella Larsen’s Passing. Most telling, though, is a piece in the October 1929 Bookman by Gilbert Seldes. He includes Virginia Woolf’s “Phases of Fiction” with his discussion of seven other recent works on the novel in “Form and the Novel.” For Seldes, Woolf “has managed, with admirable skill, to discuss the problem of form while she seemed to be discussing only the attitude of mind, the subject matter, and the general tone” (130). In 1929, then, because of “Phases of Fiction,” an American critic has already seen the theory underlying Woolf’s work, something Hogarth Press did not see in 1979 when preparing to publish Women and Writing. Michèle Barrett reports that deleting the subheading “Virginia Woolf’s Theory of Literature” from the essays in the collection because, the person in charge insisted, Woolf “did not have a ‘theory of her writing” (Barrett 15).

Perhaps the United States renewal of interest in Woolf during the 1970s and 1980s simply began with the acceptance Woolf writes about on 19 December 1923: “publishing, writing; [...]; accepted in America, neglected by all prize givers, very happy, very much on the go—that’s my state, at the moment of writing 6.14 P.M.” (D2: 278). But perhaps American readers of the 70s and 80s were ready to see Woolf’s democratic tendencies, feminist and pacifist politics, and theory as obvious because these nineteen essays had prepared the way when they were published in a wide variety of American periodicals in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940.

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Key
Na&A. Nation and Athenaeum.

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A Certain Phantom: Virginia Woolf’s Early Journalism, Censorship,
and the Angel in the House

Recent scholarship acknowledges Virginia Woolf’s early journalism as both an important reflective engagement with the medium itself and as a key stage in her literary and political development. This is an improvement on treatments that view her later essays as interpretative shortcuts and her early reviews as critically negligible. One of the most important results of this interest in Woolf’s writing for periodicals is a growing awareness of the divergence between the apparent and actual meaning of her early criticism, a divergence which has been described as part of a struggle against the “strictures of censorship, both overt and covert” (Gualtieri 29). This Woolf, who resists both external and internal censorship, coincides with recent visions of Woolf as writer-in-resistance to patriarchy and empire. The internal evidence of Woolf’s early journalism does not, however, clearly support this reading.

While it was undoubtedly necessary for Woolf as a professional journalist to “conform to editorial control,” the extent to which this affected her criticism is difficult to assess (Dubino 26). Sometimes the control was blatant: Woolf was forced to alter her review of James’ The Golden Bowl with “scissors” and a “scrawl” (Letters 1: 178). More typical was the best-known example of editorial interference in Woolf’s journalism. In 1921 the editor of the Times Literary Supplement, Bruce Richmond, requested that Woolf alter the word ‘lewd’ in her essay on Henry James’ ghost stories. Although she complied, Woolf felt that the consciousness of “writing against the current” affected her: “one writes stiffly, without spontaneity” (Diary 2: 152). However, what is at stake here is one word in a lengthy essay which includes the synonymous “obscenity” twice, which is, as Andrew McNeillie points out, the word used in her reading notes (McNeillie 381).

While undoubtedly a form of censorship, it would seem exaggerated to consider this minor alteration a particularly damaging instance of editorial control. On other occasions Woolf published more inflammatory material without difficulty. For example, she included a long quotation from Henry James’ Portraits of Places in a 1906 review:

The face of this fair creature had a pure oval, and her clear, brown eye a quiet warmth[.]…The young man stood facing her, slowly scratching his thigh, and shifting from one foot to the other. He had honest, stupid, blue eyes, and a simple smile that showed his handsome teeth. He was very well dressed. ‘I suppose it’s pretty big,’ said the beautiful young girl. ‘Yes, it’s pretty big,’ said the handsome young man. ‘It’s nicer when they are big,’ said his interlocutress, and for some time no further remark was made[.] (qtd. in Essays 1: 126)

Woolf carefully conceals the fact that the discussion concerns the size of a boat rather than a penis. While S. P. Rosenberg is uncertain as to how “indecent she meant to make Henry James sound,” Woolf’s phallic humour seems fairly obvious (181). If this could slip under the net, it seems unlikely Woolf was in general overly confined by the strictures of her editors. The sense of restriction she recorded in 1921 was just that—a sense, or a subjective interpretation of a situation valid as such, but not something that can be relied on as an impartial assessment of the role of censorship in Woolf’s early career.

Thus Kathleen Lyttelton, editor of the women’s pages of the Guardian, may have stuck “her broad thumb into the middle of” Woolf’s sentences to improve their “moral tone,” leading Woolf to complain, according to Elena Gualtieri, “in her letters of Mrs Lyttelton’s editorial interventions” (L1: 214; Gualtieri 23). Similarly, Reginald Smith of Cornhill may have

1 Gualtieri’s argument that Woolf “often complained in her letters of Mrs Lyttelton’s editorial interventions” is peculiar (23). Thirty-three letters in the Hogarth edition of Woolf’s letters refer to Mrs Lyttelton; only three complain of editorial interventions (Woolf, L1: 172; 1: 206). Three letters not often, especially as Woolf gave permission to Lyttelton to “alter my things as you like,” expressed
“added words” and “cut out others” from Woolf’s writing, yet it seems that she generally wrote what she wanted to write (L1: 332).

Perhaps the most widely accepted argument regarding Woolf’s early journalism is that, as Leila Brosnan writes, Woolf’s experience of editors led her to “internalise the lessons they offered and develop her own forms of self-censorship” (58). To subvert this internalised repression, she employed a “suggestive subtext that undercuts” the “surface conformity” of her articles (Brosnan 40). Techniques of “metaphor and simile, quotation and patterning,” Brosnan believes, constitute a “language of disguise” allowing Woolf to express herself freely (64-65). Woolf’s early reviews suggest, however, that self-censorship was not a problem even in the early stages of her career (Brosnan 65-66).

Woolf herself famously claimed in a 1931 speech to the Women’s Service League that her reviews had been shaped by self-censorship:

Articles have to be about something. Mine[...] was about a novel by a famous man. And while I was writing this review, I discovered that if I were going to review books I should need to do battle with a certain phantom. And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her[[...]][the Angel in the House. It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews[[...]] Directly, that is to say, I took my pen in my hand to review that novel by a famous man, she slipped behind me and whispered: “My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive[...].” Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. (Woolf, “Professions” 236-37)

As Brosnan points out, Woolf refers to two authors in the draft version of her speech, Henry James and Thomas Carlyle, and as Woolf refers to the beginning of her career the novelist must be Henry James, whose *The Golden Bowl* Woolf reviewed in 1905 (Brosnan 58). If Woolf’s retrospective claims are valid, this review should be disfigured by self-censorship, scarred by The Angel in the House.

James’ *The Golden Bowl* was, in 1905, the most recent novel by a major writer, “revered by other writers, and the more discriminating critics,” the author of perhaps “the most demanding fiction” of Woolf’s time, and an important critic in his own right (Lodge 202; Rosenbaum 155). Hermione Lee argues that this was an exceptionally intimidating book to send to a novice reviewer; even more so as James was an old friend of the Stephen family (213). If anything could prevent Woolf from giving a clear and explicit critical opinion these circumstances seem likely to have done so. Yet Woolf’s review is astonishingly trenchant. 2

James is, Woolf writes, “sufficiently great,” and has gifts which “fail very little of first-rate quality” (E1: 22). Woolf’s comments are characteristic of the complimentary portions of the review. She damns with faint praise, yet her explicit criticism of the novel is even more direct. She disagrees with James’s “theory of what a novel ought to be”; the plot is “of the slightest,” as is the theme; the reader suffers from “a surfeit of words”; the characters are “ghosts”; sentences are “overburdened”; and overall the book lacks “genius” (E1: 22-24).

Woolf’s critique is sweeping, detailed, and anything but tender and sympathetic. Her final qualification, that “there is no living novelist whose standard is higher, or whose achievement is so consistently great,” offers little amelioration (E1: 24). If this review is the evidence for the existence of the Angel in the House, Woolf seems to have been singularly ineffective in policing her young charge. Woolf, at the age of 23, roughly two months after the publication of her first article, could write and publish an openly critical review of the pre-eminent male author of the era regardless of any hesitation she may have experienced. It seems improbable, then, that she felt the need to code her 1921 critique of a minor novelist such as W. E. Norris in the “linguistic subtleties” Brosnan describes as a typical product of self-censorship (Brosnan 65). In fact, in her first review of Norris, a 1905 critique of *Barham of Beltana*, Woolf’s condemnation was explicit: the novel is “a simple story” written from a “prosaic point of view” by an author who does not “take any very excessive interest in the performance” (E1: 36-37). The gleefully subtle destruction of Norris’ *Tony the Exceptional* read so carefully and perceptively by Brosnan is, I would argue, the result (not of strategic evasion of editorial interference and self-censoring impulses, but of Woolf’s boredom at reviewing yet another tedious novel by Norris, especially when, by 1921, Woolf had reviewed four of these works) in relation to conscious craftsmanship: the desire to say better what she had said before. Woolf’s subtle critical approach is not a “prose of protest,” or a “language of disguise,” but a playful celebration of literary virtuosity (Brosnan 65).

This evidence suggests, then, that Woolf’s early journalism was written without excessive editorial interference or self-censorship. This is not to say that Woolf did not face editorial intervention or struggle against internalized patterns of socially acceptable thought and expression; these are part of the common experience of writing. Rather, the point is that readings of Woolf’s early journalism, which emphasise these elements of her writing and use them as hermeneutic keys to interpretative locks, are in danger of providing a distorted image of Woolf’s early writing, an image shaped by both Woolf’s entirely valid retrospective feminist narration of her career and by recent critical pre-occupations, rather than by the textual evidence of the reviews and essays themselves.

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Virginia Woolf and the *Athenaeum*

Virginia Woolf wrote seventeen articles for the *Athenaeum* after John Middleton Murry became its editor in 1919. The *Athenaeum*, founded in 1828, was the most illustrious literary periodical of the Victorian period, but by the early twentieth century it was in decline. Murry turned that old-fashioned, languishing periodical into a vehicle for the expression of a consolidating Bloomsbury brand of modernism. David Goldie describes the *Athenaeum* under Murry as “something of a hybrid. On the surface it maintains the form and comprehensiveness of the Victorian Review, but in its contents it displays the radical uncertainty of the post-war world” (37).

On the personal level, for Murry, the *Athenaeum* was a project that might finally overcome his and Katherine Mansfield’s long-standing sense of dislocation and exclusion in relation to Bloomsbury. In turn, Virginia Woolf’s involvement in the *Athenaeum* reveals much about her ambivalent feelings about both Mansfield and Murry. It also reveals much about her insecurity over her own positioning within the intelligentsia, something that people like the Murrys—on the borders of Bloomsbury—would have been surprised to learn.

Apparently, Woolf felt hurt when she thought that she might not be asked to contribute to the *Athenaeum*, since Lytton Strachey and others had already been approached by Murry before she finally received a note from Mansfield on 12 February 1912, mentioning that “Murray has been made editor of the Athenaeum; he was wondering whether you’d write for it. I wish you would” (*Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield* 2: 302). The next day Woolf confided in her diary: “I am asked to write for the Athenaeum, so that little scratch in my vanity is healed” (*Diary* 1: 243).

Woolf seemed to enter into the preparations enthusiastically despite that initial “scratch.” On 15 March, she recorded that Murry “has asked L. [Leonard] to do the social, I mean social reform, side of the Athenaeumum [sic], pressing upon him a large yellow book for review. James [Strachey] has extracted the post of dramatic critic” (*D1*: 254). And she quickly took up Murry’s editorship as a subject of entertaining gossip, as in her letter to Vanessa Bell on 19 March:

Our chief amusement now is Murry and the Athenaeum. He is in a state of high exaltation, something like a Prime Minister, for everyone buzzes about asking for appointments, and needless to say, *though please dont repeat this*, the Stracheys have induced him much against his better judgment, to adopt James as dramatic critic…. It is rather fun about the Athenaeum, as every one is to write what they like, and Mrs [Humphry] Ward is to be exposed, and in time they hope to print imaginative prose by me—Murry has got a man called John Gordon, a very bad painter he says, to do art criticism; but I suggested that he’d much better get Duncan to do the important things at any rate—not that Duncan is exactly fluent in composition, but I don’t see why he and I and you shouldn’t maulder about in picture galleries, and what with his genius and your sublimity and my perfectly amazing gift of writing English we might turn out articles between us. (*Letters* 2: 341; Woolf’s emphasis)

Yet despite her enthusiasm, Woolf began to feel uneasy about her involvement in the project. Before the first issue of the *Athenaeum* had even been produced, she commented in her diary:

> These little bits of literary gossip strike me as slightly discretable. They point perhaps to one’s becoming a professional, a hack of the type of Mrs W. K. Clifford, who used to know exactly what everyone was paid, & who wrote what, & all the rest of it. I can see father listening with disapproval but secret enjoyment. (*D1*: 254-55)

Nonetheless, Woolf’s “little bits of literary gossip” provide lively insights into Murry’s newly-born self-assurance, as in her entry of 19 March:

> Success has already begun to do for Murry what I always said it would do. He is more freshly coloured, even in the cheeks, than when we last met; & his mind has its high lights. Why, he chuckled like a schoolboy; his eyes shone; his silences were occupied with pleasant thoughts, I think; not that he would admit that to edit the Athenaeum was much more than preferable to a place in a government office. (*D1*: 256)

In this diary entry Woolf is struck by the contrast between Murry’s assumed professionalism and the man she had only so recently patronized, who “is much of a small boy still…in spite of his tragic airs. I suspect his boast will come true; the Athenaeum will be the best literary paper in existence in 12 months” (*D1*: 256).

Some residual anxiety about her own position remains, however. The reversal in their roles now seems to make Woolf hesitant about Murry’s perception of her:

> “What will you write Virginia?” he asked. Am I too modest in thinking that there was a shade of the perfuntory in the question? Anyhow I didn’t persecute him with any degree of pressure. I offered to look in on Thursdays sometimes & get a book; sometimes to suggest an article; he agreed quite cordially. (*D1*: 256-57)

Nevertheless, she uses the opportunity of this visit with Murry to press for the inclusion of more of her friends, perhaps immediately perceiving what an opportune situation this might be for enhancing Bloomsbury cultural dominance:

> We went over all his names, & tried to think of others, but agreed that once our intimate friends were gone through the field was mown of its poppies. The younger generation promises very little so far…. While we were demurring a little to the idea of James [Strachey] as dramatic critic, the dramatic critic looked in & saw us. I recommended Desmond for the star part. Katherine will do 4 novels every week—pray to God she don’t do mine! I feel the acid in her once more. (*D1*: 257)

Woolf could put aside her hesitation about Mansfield, however, as is apparent in her diary entry three days later, when she praises her for “caring so genuinely if so differently from the way I care, about our precious art,” and finally decides that “[t]hough Katherine is now in the very heart of the professional world—4 books on her table to review—she is, & will always be I fancy, not the least of a hack” (*D1*: 258).

Nonetheless, Woolf did have something to fear from Mansfield’s “acid.” Murry seems to have exaggerated a growing competition between the two women by assigning the review of *Night and Day* to Mansfield. Even before reading the novel, Mansfield had complained to Ottoline Morrell that “it will be acclaimed a masterpiece & she will be drawn round Gordon Square in a chariot designed by Roger after a supper given by Clive” (*KMCL* 2:352). When Mansfield finally read *Night and Day* she found herself in a real quandary. She disliked it intensely and yet did not want to say it outright in her review for fear of offending Woolf, although Murry encouraged her to say “exactly what you think of Virginia’s book. It’s all important that you should. We have no right

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1. The editorial copies of the *Athenaeum* housed in the library of City University in London contain Murry’s penciled notations naming the authors whose work appeared anonymously, and also indicate how much all the writers were paid for their articles. Woolf received £3.16.6 for her first review, “The Eccentrics,” which appeared in the issue of 25 April 1919.
to require truth from others if we don’t exact it from our friends.” (Murry 212). Woolf was deeply distressed by Mansfield’s review, as Woolf’s biographers and critics have fully noted.

Although John Carswell remarked that “the standards and the bow” of the Athenaeum “were to be high to the point of ruthlessness,” it might better be argued that Murry’s achievement as editor was to advance modernist aesthetics and theory in a manner accessible to what Woolf called “the common reader” (156). The avant-garde journals (such as Rhythm and Blaxt) tended towards exclusivity, but the interdisciplinary character of the Athenaeum, which billed itself as a “Journal of English & Foreign Literature, Science, the Fine Arts, Music & the Drama,” would allow for new, broader conversations to take place among the educated middle-class.

These conversations were not restricted to its readers, for the contributors to the Athenaeum also influenced each other in numerous ways. This is not surprising, given the supposition that a writer is likely to read other articles in the same issue of a periodical in which she or he appears, especially if the periodical is a new venture, its editor a figure of interest (be that of envy, scorn, or gossipy curiosity), and one’s friends also contributors. Although it might not be possible to “prove” that Woolf, for example, read a particular essay if she did not write about it in a letter or diary entry, one would be on fairly stable ground to suggest that she probably did read, say, Clive Bell’s essay on Cezanne or Leonard Woolf’s essay on writing history. She might very well have read the review by E. M. Goodman of Alice Clark’s Poems on 13 June 1919, and Murry would ask Virginia Woolf to publish her first experimental novel: Jacob’s Room. Woolf’s reactions to Katherine Mansfield’s reviews of current fiction or Leonard Woolf’s essay on writing history. She might very well have read the review by E. M. Goodman of Alice Clark’s Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century. And it is highly likely that she read J.W.N. Sullivan’s articles on science. Michael Whitworth points out that “Sullivan pioneered the exposition of relativity and the exploration of its implications,” writing five articles on relativity for the Athenaeum during May and June 1919 (152). The Athenaeum would influence Woolf’s thinking about contemporary science, art, and politics even if she remained ambivalent about her personal involvement with its production.

The personal factor would have been foremost when it came to Woolf’s reactions to Katherine Mansfield’s reviews of current fiction in the Athenaeum. She most certainly would have read them, if only to compare them with her own reviews elsewhere of the same books, or to discover what Mansfield might have said about her own work. There was, to be sure, an incestuous quality to book reviewing in the Athenaeum.2 For example, Mansfield had reviewed Kew Gardens in the Athenaeum on 13 June 1919, and Murry would ask Virginia Woolf to write a review of his own poem Critic in Judgement, along with Eliot’s Poems (both published by the Hogarth Press). That review appeared as “Is This Poetry?” on 20 June 1919. Woolf was hesitant when Murry first asked her to do so and turned to Lytton Strachey, asking him “to do it instead. I shall try to wriggle out on the ground of my connection, and pecuniary interest” (L2: 361). She later wrote to Philip Morrell the following explanation:

The truth is that Murry asked me to do it, and I refused; then he insisted, and with the greatest labour in the world I began an article, but broke down. Leonard went on with it; and then we cobbled the two parts together hoping that no one would recognise either of us. It’s rather important both for the Hogarth Press and for the Athenaeum that nobody should know this; so please keep the secret. It’s such a mixture of Leonard and me both trying not to give ourselves away that we’re surprised that you should have suspected either of us. I thought of telling you, but had promised not to, and hoped you’d forget. On the whole, its more Leonards work, I think than mine; but I never owned up to Murry that I had to call in help, and would rather he didn’t know. (L2: 373)

Her later explanation to Eliot may be somewhat disingenuous: “I have to confess that it was not I who reviewed your poems in the Athenaeum, but my husband. (I don’t think I told Murry this). We felt awkward at reviewing our own publications, and agreed to share the guilt: he reviewed you, and I reviewed Murry” (L2: 437).

Despite its many important contributors, including T. S. Eliot, Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley, E. M. Forster, and Roger Fry, the Athenaeum was not financially successful, and by February 1921, Murry’s editorship came to an end, and the paper was merged with the Nation. It is clear that much of Woolf’s interest in the Athenaeum had to do with working with her closest friends. Whenever she was actually brought into contact with its editorial staff, however, her distaste for the “underworld” of journalism surfaced, as in her description on 6 July 1920 of “the first Athenaeum lunch—a long single file of insignificant brain workers eating bad courses.” Woolf’s figurative language betrays a level of class bias when she remarks: “This lunch was a little dingy & professional, a glimpse into the scullery where the Sullivans & Pounds & Murrys & Huxleys stand stripped with their arms in washtub” (D2: 52).

Although such personal reactions continued to dampen Woolf’s enthusiasm for the Athenaeum, she nonetheless was able to use the brief period of her involvement (1919-1921) to good effect. Not only did it give her the opportunity to engage creatively and intellectually with her Bloomsbury compatriots on a shared endeavor, but it awakened her to new directions in the arts and sciences that would enlarge her vision of the “New.” This period was simultaneously the time of Woolf’s most intense preoccupation with the theoretical issues related to the writing of modernist fiction. Soon after the demise of the Athenaeum, Woolf would publish her first experimental novel: Jacob’s Room.

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2 For a thorough discussion of such conflicts of interest in Bloomsbury book reviewing, see Hermione Lee’s article, “Crimes of Criticism.”
Meddling Middlebrows: Virginia Woolf and the London Mercury

To speak of brows—“low,” “middle,” “high”—is to speak of a complex field of real and symbolic economies: dubious historical divisions between classes and tastes that reinforce hierarchies rather than describe actual cultural conditions. Nonetheless, the middlebrow is becoming an important lens through which modernist scholars read the often conflicting desires of elite producers who had to survive in the profit-driven logic of the periodical market—a market they identified as variegated. The word “middlebrow,” though a widely accepted way of reading a large swath of textual material produced for a middle readership, did not enter the English language until 1924—two years after our fabled annus mirabilis of 1922, and it had specific connotations as it was used by elite moderns to describe the conditions of literary production.¹

The London Mercury, edited by J. C. Squire, was the most popular and successful of the so-called middlebrow magazines as it dully negotiated the demands of the competitive print marketplace and the aspirations to cultural distinction of its educated readership. It was scorned by the modernists, including Woolf, as being too commercial, but I argue that this was only a rhetorical move on their part, one which allowed them to remain seemingly disinterested about commercial concerns while simultaneously profiting from the middlebrow’s cultural position.² The middlebrow was a space of cultural mediation between spheres of writing perceived by elite producers as high and low, and most importantly, it was an important site where modernists met the marketplace.

Woolf posited herself as a commentator on the middlebrow in an unsent letter to the New Statesman in 1932:

[Middlebrows] are the people, I confess, that I seldom regard with entire cordiality. They are the go-betweens; they are the busybodies who run from one to the other with their little tattle and make all the mischief—the middlebrows, I repeat. But what, you may ask, is a middlebrow? And that, to tell the truth, is no easy question to answer. They are neither one thing nor the other. They are not highbrows, whose brows are high; nor lowbrows, whose brows are low. Their brows are betwixt and between…The middlebrow is the man, or woman, of middlebred intelligence who ambles and saunters now on this side of the hedge, now on that, in pursuit of no single object, neither art itself nor life itself, but both mixed indistinguishably, and rather nastily, with money, fame, power, or prestige…If any human being, man, woman, dog, cat or half-crushed worm dares call me “middlebrow” I will take my pen and stab him, dead. (Death of the Moth and Other Essays 115-119)

It is clear that Woolf is imagining a figure such as Squire when she describes the middlebrow in this letter. She writes to Molly MacCarthy that Squire is a “common horse-pond” (L3: 41), though she admits to Ethel Smyth that she is “jaundiced by [her] sense of [Squire’s] pervading mediocrity and thick thumbedness” (L4: 188). Moreover, Woolf’s “Middlebrow” is rife with little hints identifying Squire, a fervent lover and player of cricket, as the primary figure of her ire: “These middlebrows pat balls about; they poke their bats and muff their catches at cricket” (DM 116).³

Though she threatened any critic who would call her middlebrow, Woolf published and profited from work in Squire’s London Mercury with “An Unwritten Novel” (July 1920) and “Lives of the Obscure” (January 1924); she also attempted to publish portions of her memoir in March 1923, but was “snubbed” by Squire when she wanted £15 for the story and he was only willing to pay £13 (Diary 2: 239). These works were not simply bagatelles that Woolf thought she could throw away; in fact, in a letter to Ethel Smyth she locates the genesis of her unique writing style in “An Unwritten Novel”:

“The Unwritten Novel” was the great discovery, however. That—again in one second—showed me how I could embody all my deposit of experience in a shape that fitted it—not that I have ever reached that end; but anyhow I saw, branching out of the tunnel I made, when I discovered that method of approach… (L4: 231)

The middlebrow represented a threat to writers like Woolf not merely because of its position “betwixt and between” the high and low, but because of its proximity to what they constructed as the high-brow. Magazines like Squire’s were close enough to highbrow producers that Woolf could write for and profit from contributions. The London Mercury was not an ideal highbrow location for publishing, since it did not represent the aesthetic ideals of elite moderns, but it certainly was not slumming either. In the scheme of operative terms in force during these years, the Mercury is really high-middlebrow or low-highbrow since it attempted to uphold self-defined codes of “good” literature and engaged in a project to “protect” the literary values held by the editor—that it is, it had a stake in upholding one tradition over another.⁴ Precisely because of the central positioning of the London Mercury in literary culture, Woolf could showcase her work without fear of being accused of slumming in lowbrow magazines, while still being able to complain of the so-called “mediocrity” of this magazine in her journals.

Woolf and Squire had a publicly cordial relationship, and as in many of Woolf’s relationships in the print market, she saved her disdain for her private journal entries and letters. They dined once in a while, and Woolf seems to have vacillated between pure hatred and idle curiosity when describing the man. In 1919, she writes to Lytton Strachey, saying, “Jack Squire himself was more repulsive than words can express, and malignant into the bargain. As for the conduct and appearance of the rest, it was deplorable to conceive oneself of the same shape, more or less—not altogether thank God! Please assure me that we are rather different—some of us at least” (L2: 361). Squire seems to represent all that Woolf hates about the magazine market, and she notes in a letter to Clive Bell that, “Squire begs me to contribute to his slop pail of stale tea [the London Mercury]” (L2: 404). Woolf wishes to position herself outside of his influence and begs to be considered different. Yet the two share an oblique fascination with one another. In her diary, Woolf admits to a degree of respect when she writes,

Squire is at least direct & honest. I don’t like it when he talks about love patriotism & paternity, but on the other hand I can speak my mind to him…He pressed me to write for the London Mercury….At present the battle in our circles is between James & Desmond. James wishes to ‘stab humbug dead.’ Desmond & I wish, on the contrary, to revive it like a phoenix from its ashes. The difference is fundamental; but I am equally able to write for Murray, Squire or Desmond—a proof of catholicity or immorality, according to your tastes. (D2: 15-16)

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1 The terms “lowbrow” and “highbrow” are also modern inventions, coined in 1908 and 1906 respectively.

2 See Robert Scholes, The Paradoxy of Modernism, in which he argues that exclusion of the middle is a trait of elite modernist producers.


4 This is in contrast against other “middlebrow” magazines that pursued solely commercial attention—that is, magazines that did not attempt to express or defend literary values, such as The Windsor Magazine. I call these venues the “commercial middlebrow” in order to distinguish them from the “modernist middlebrow”; the latter term refers to venues designated by elite producers as too “commercial,” which were in fact engaged in an aesthetic battle with elite moderns over the direction of literary modernity.
Woolf says privately what she will not admit publicly: she is “equally able” to write for the likes of Squire, and she is unsure whether this ability is based in her wide talents, her “proof of catholicity,” or some other motive. Squire seems to have had a very positive impression of Woolf. She records that Squire admitted to her that he “respects me immensely” (D2: 19). 4 Whatever the attraction, Squire openly courted Woolf to contribute to his magazine, and she complied with “An Unwritten Novel” in 1920.

“An Unwritten Novel” exemplifies the paradoxical dynamic of the middlebrow magazine as a site of literary production for modernists. The story centers on a woman in a train who studies another woman sitting across from her. The style is in Woolf’s signature stream of consciousness, as the narrator imagines what the woman across from her is experiencing. This story is of particular interest to this study in that Woolf uses both periodicals and the “knowledge of the other” as plot devices. Indeed, Woolf carefully sets up two types of languages in “An Unwritten Novel”: one which is known, embodied by the shared knowledge of the Times, and one belonging to an inner, difficult space of human experience.

The work opens on the train, as the narrator thinks to herself, suspecting that the other person in the car can read her thoughts even while she hides behind the Times:

As if she heard me, she looked up, shifted slightly in her seat and sighed. She seemed to apologise and at the same time to say to me, “If only you knew!” Then she looked at life again. “But I do know,” I answered silently, glancing at the Times for manners’ sake: “I know the whole business. ‘Peace between Germany and the Allied Powers was yesterday officially ushered in at Paris—Signor Nitti, the Italian Prime Minister—a passenger train at Doncaster was in collision with a goods train…’ We all know—the Times knows—but we pretend we don’t.” My eyes had once more crept over the paper’s rim. She shuddered, twitched her arm queerly to the middle of her back and shook her head. Again I dipped into my great reservoir of life. “Take what you like,” I continued, “births, deaths, marriages, Court Circular, the habits of birds, Leonardo da Vinci, the Sandhills murder, high wages and the cost of living—oh, take what you like,” I repeated, “it’s all in the Times!” Again, with infinite weariness she moved her head from side to side until, like a top exhausted with spinning, it settled on her neck. The Times was no protection against such sorrow as hers. (237)

The Times here serves three purposes. First, it is representative of an old British institution that had come under attack by the popular press and rampant commercialism. After the Book War 5 ended in 1908, Lord Northcliffe, who was largely credited with introducing popular journalism to Britain, bought the Times. This event caused great anxiety among elite readers as a sign that no British institution was safe from the logic of capitalism and the whims of the mass market. Second, it physically blocks eye contact between the two protagonists—it is that thing behind which one can hide. Third, there is a language of the Times, so to speak, that apparently gives the two characters a shared experience through words: the public experience of the British readership reinforced daily through birth and death notices, news on the war, etc. These are things that are known. The Times represents an outward knowledge with which Woolf creates a verbal as well as physical façade, an imperfect one since “The Times” could “be no protection against such sorrows as hers.” As the narrator starts to imagine the life of the woman across from her, a man walks in. The narrator prays that “he might stay,” but he rouses himself, “crumpled his paper contemptuously, like a thing done with, burst open the door and left us alone” (274). But then the narrator begins her journey inward, in a stream-of-consciousness imagining of what this woman’s unknowable life is like, this Minnie Marsh.

Julia Briggs notes that we cannot underestimate the importance of Woolf’s technique in this story. She writes, “‘An Unwritten Novel’ traces an imaginary life for Woolf’s first archetypal anonymous middle-aged woman in a railway carriage, a woman invisible to historians and novelists alike” (35). This woman is also “invisible” in the news of the Times. Its endless front-page facts of war chronicle the man’s world of politics and war. The woman narrator literally hides behind this news, at first, by holding the paper up to her face. But then Woolf goes beyond the artifact of the paper, piercing its thin membrane to get inside the head of her narrator and the woman across from her. The narrator is engaged in an act of reading that goes beyond what the Times has to offer. The narrator retreats into a feminized space of experience even while continuing to acknowledge the limits to knowing it—hence the special difficulty and complexity of Woolf’s narrative.

The story continues as the narrator fleshes out the lives of men and woman who interact with her subject, until the final paragraph, when the narrator enters an ecstatic oneness with those around her, as if plunging directly into what she has only imagined—and withheld—up until now:

Oh, how it whirls and surges—floats me afresh! I start after them. People drive this way and that. The white light splutters and pours. Plate-glass windows. Carnations; chrysanthemums. Ivy in dark gardens. Milk carts at the door. Wherever I go, mysterious figures! I see you, turning the corner, mothers and sons; you, you, you. I hasten, I follow. This, I fancy, must be the sea. Grey is the landscape; dim as ashes; the water murmurs and moves. If I fall on my knees, if I go through the ritual, the ancient antics, it’s you, unknown figures, you I adore; if I open my arms, it’s you I embrace, you I draw to me—adorable world! (280)

In this last paragraph we see why Woolf called this her “great discovery” (L4: 370), for it is a style of inner subjectivity mirrored in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Jacob’s Room and Mrs. Dalloway. Woolf creates a break from the traditional male-dominated narrative—associated here with the Times newspaper and its fierce male reader, and creates a subjective, imaginary world for her female protagonists beyond the confines of male-dominated, regimentalized print—what Q. D. Leavis would call the “print page…altered” by Northcliffe—one that encouraged mere skimming and “[could not] be read properly” (226). Woolf moves her readers beyond the bold headlines and short columns of modern print culture to a deeper consciousness where sentences flow from one sensation to another.

Why was this story published in the London Mercury? Unfortunately, Woolf does not say exactly why she finally caved in to Squire’s pleading for material. Then again, if Squire were so mediocrous in his conception of literature, why publish Woolf? For Woolf, the obvious benefit of publishing in the London Mercury was its larger audience for the impressionistic strokes on her canvas. The payment from a middlebrow magazine would not have been something to scoff at either. In addition, “An Unwritten Novel” was not as foreign to Squire’s readership as, say, a story by Gertrude Stein would have been. After “Lives of the Obscure,” Woolf never published with Squire again. Her diary in 1924 betrays a reason for this: “As for fame & money, Clive’s long article on me is out in The Dial. £50, apparently, from Harper. Clearly, as I said, we are safe to make, both of us, as much as we want by our pens.

5 For a different reading of Woolf’s approach to the common reader, see Melba Cuddy-Keane, Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere.

6 “The Book War” was a three-year skirmish between the Times newspaper and the Publishers of Britain and Ireland. The Times Book Club, in an attempt to boost subscribers to its lending library and newspaper, began to contravene the “Net Book Agreement of 1897.” The publishers black-listed the paper and refused to sell books to it, while the Times urged its readers not to buy books from the rapacious book publishers.
Never again, I daresay, shall we agitate about getting £15 from Jack Squire” (D2: 325). It was not that Squire was so mediocre; it was that his payments were so mediocre. For Squire, who admired Woolf, the coup of including a member of the younger generation in his pages spoke to his catholicity in taste and answered his mission to become a platform for a wide swath of artistic production.

The London Mercury constituted a mediator in a field of periodical production that concerned itself with the economic necessities inherent to the literary profession, particularly in the magazines. It was savvy enough to negotiate the commercial concerns of a successful periodical as well as take an aesthetic stand about literary modernity. As we see in Woolf’s work, the London Mercury’s proximity to the emerging modernist highbrow made it a tempting site of publication; modernists almost necessarily derided its central positioning while still profiting from it. Its importance in the field of periodical production cannot be underestimated since it was a force that successfully negotiated the divides of the modernist print market until the late 1920s. What Squire endeavored to promulgate was a wider view of culture than what elite modernist coteries allowed. What he achieved in his magazine was an often-disputed, but hard-won middle ground.

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“Chaos. Slaughter. War Surrounding Our Island.”

Four months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War on 18 July 1936, Virginia Woolf reflected in her diary on 10 November: “I am tired this morning: too much strain & racing yesterday. The Daily Worker article. Madrid not fallen. Chaos. Slaughter. War surrounding our island” (Diary 5: 32). As Italy and Germany joined Franco’s Nationalist forces in their attack on the Republican-held Spanish capital, Woolf struggled to write her first and only contribution to the Daily Worker, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The article she produced, “Why Art To-Day Follows Politics,” was, according to Anne Olivier Bell, prompted by a request from Elizabeth Watson—the painter, Communist, and “charming and persuasive...friend of Quentin Bell”—that Woolf write an essay in support of the Artists International Association (D5: 30 n4). More commonly known as “The Artist and Politics,” the title under which this text appeared in Leonard Woolf’s later editions of his wife’s essays, “Why Art To-Day Follows Politics” accrates a new range of historical and political resonances when resituated in the context of its original publication in the Daily Worker on 14 December 1936.1 This commission was fundamentally tied in Woolf’s mind, as the above diary quotation illustrates, to both the ongoing war in Spain and the escalating threat of international conflict across Europe at this time.

The Artists International Association, founded in London in 1933 at the moment of Hitler’s rise to power in Germany, was a politically left-wing exhibiting society whose aim, as cited in their first manifesto, was to promote “the international unity of artists against Imperialist War on the Soviet Union, Fascism and Colonial oppression” (qtd. in Morris and Redford 11). Misha Black, the group’s first chairman, recalled in AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association that the society was “very strongly Communist” and “initially very much a young man’s organisation” (qtd. in Morris and Redford 8). During the mid-1930s the group maintained a fruitful relationship with the Daily Worker, to which a number of the AIA’s members regularly wrote or contributed Marxist cartoons. As the AIA expanded, altering its manifesto in 1935 to become a popular front “against Fascism and War and the suppression of culture,” it began to attract associates with a broader range of leftist political consciences, including pacifists such as Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell (Morris and Redford 28). By August 1936, following the eruption of civil war in Spain, the AIA had over 600 members including many prominent British artists such as Augustus John, Laura Knight, and Henry Moore (Morris and Redford 2).

The profile of the Communist Party of Great Britain rose steadily in this atmosphere of heightened international instability, in part due to the success of the Daily Worker. First published on 1 January 1930, this eight-page daily newspaper was a mouthpiece for the CPGB, and its editors were drawn from the party. A statement from the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow declared in the first issue: “[The Daily Worker] will be the rallying point for the fight...against the Labour government of rationalisation, anti-Soviet intrigues, colonial brutalities and preparation for another imperialist war” (qtd. in Dewar 87). Priced at a penny, the paper was headed with

1 Quotations here are taken from the more accessible Collected Essays version, and differ from the Daily Worker text only in punctuation.
the Daily Worker on 4 December 1936, titled, ironically, “Restricting the Conflict,” epitomizes the paper’s stance on this situation. A huddle of pin-striped figures, members of the League of Nations’ “Non-Intervention Committee” of which Britain was an enthusiastic proponent, are depicted pleading with a tight-lipped Adolf Hitler for “assurance that we are just seeing things” as an army of rifle-bearing soldiers march behind with a Nazi flag in the direction of Madrid. While the British government resolutely refused to send troops to Spain, the front page of the Daily Worker issue in which “Why Art To-Day Follows Politics” appeared praised British volunteers who had recently joined the International Column in Madrid with the patriotic headline, “Spain Now Sings ‘Tipperary’. The Real Volunteers at Work.” Edward Scroogie’s account of the AIA’s December exhibition, printed on the page facing Woolf’s article, demonstrates the newspaper’s positive representation of the popular turn against “Non-Intervention” at this time. On opening the show, Scroogie reports, the journalist A. J. Cummings declared that people might be surprised to find a man “who had always been interested in pacifist organisations” introducing this exhibition, “but they must realise that the time had come when, if democracy was to be saved, pacifism was not enough.” A month earlier, on 12 November, the Daily Worker had printed close-up photographs of the bruised and blood-splattered bodies of Spanish children killed by the Madrid bombings accompanied by the rousing caption: “Look on these pictures and resolve, blow for blow, man for man, shall be our reply until the arms of democracy have won the only way to peace” (“Nazi” 5). Unlike her Daily Worker editors, and much of the AIA who “Why Art To-Day Follows Politics” aimed to defend, Woolf did not support the opposition of fascism by force. Her antiwar sentiments remain unspoken, however, within the pages of this militaristic newspaper.

“Why Art To-Day Follows Politics” closes with the assertion that contemporary artists are “forced to take part in politics” (CE2: 232). Prominent political comment might damage the aesthetic integrity of art, Woolf reasons, but as citizens, workers and intellectuals, artists cannot ignore the serious threat that fascism and war currently present to their society and their existence. Woolf’s frank analysis of the artist’s social role in this article, as indicated by its title, is located firmly in the “To-Day” that she addresses—the “To-day” embodied in the Daily Worker itself. The resonance of this periodical setting, however, is lost in Leonard Woolf’s Collected Essays, which makes no reference to the Worker. Jane Marcus reads an “impulse of whitewash” behind this omission (105). While I would not read so conscious an agenda, I agree that by omitting to give details of this article’s history and re-titling it “The Artist and Politics,” Leonard stripped this text of its temporal specificity.

With the exception of the title change, the two versions of Woolf’s essay differ markedly only in paragraphing and punctuation. Yet reading “Why Art To-Day Follows Politics” in its original version within the ephemeral form of the Daily Worker restores important historical nuances to this text that remain inaccessible in the collected editions, enabling the reader to recapture the political climate of the latter months of 1936 in which and about which this forthright statement on the relationship between art and society was written.

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“Restricting the Conflict.” Daily Worker 4 Dec 1936: 5.


A Vagrant Quote from May Sarton
(many thanks to J. J. Wilson, the recipient of the letter)

In a recent email, J. J. Wilson quotes the passage below from a letter she received from May Sarton when they were both judges on a College Student Book of the Month Club contest, and J. J. was teaching at Smith College in winter 1968.

Whatever may be said against Virginia’s genius, I know of no novelist today for whose next book one waits with such passionate interest, for simply as artist, as maker (underlined) she never did the same thing twice, she was always growing.

May Sarton
Feb 2d (1968) from the Nelson Village house

As J. J. notes, “The context here was congratulating me for doing a dissertation of Woolf as the pendulum had swung too far away from the ‘over-praise while she was alive.’” In the same email, J. J. writes: “And btw [May Sarton] loved Leonard and [said] his ‘autobiographies are meat and drink...’

These letters will be placed in the May Sarton file in the Women Writers Archives, to be housed in the Sitting Room, currently located in Cotati, California.

Correction of Erratum in
Virginia Woolf Miscellany, 73 (Spring/Summer 2009)
In Judy Little’s poem, “Woolf: Anti-Elegist,” the word my in the last line should be myth. The complete poem, with the correction, is reprinted below.

Woolf: Anti-Elegist

In Woolf’s The Waves, for instance, how the dead friend has turned away from himself. And light from a known door splashes tables, banquet in silver, friendship

word in word, all shoreless voices at full sea,

sung turning selfless their text of bright unknowing,

restless to speak, and spoken the sign still waiting

haunted, a moon against the sun and blank with shape—

No grief outside the text, and myth all unbefriending.

Judy Little (ret.)
Southern Illinois University–Carbondale

REVIEW

MRS. WOOLF AND THE SERVANTS: AN INTIMATE HISTORY OF DOMESTIC LIFE IN BLOOMSBURY


It is much to be regretted that no lives of maids, from which a more fully documented account could be constructed, are to be found in the Dictionary of National Biography.

—Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas, 1938

Until Alison Light’s book, Mrs. Woolf and the Servants: An Intimate History of Domestic Life in Bloomsbury, most critics sympathetic to Woolf would sweep her views of servants under the carpet. Or deny their importance to understanding the literary work of modernism. But since the rise of the new historicism and cultural studies, information about the obscure lives of servants and Woolf’s views have been framed in terms of social change and power relations—“on or about December, 1910, human character changed”—signaling the rise of the cook and the maid.

Light’s interest in the topic of servants was piqued when she found Woolf’s diaries full of vicious remarks about her cook, Nellie Boxall, who lived with Leonard and Virginia Woolf for eighteen years, 1916-1934, despite frequent squabbles. It was a story, as Light said, “of mutual—and unequal—dependence” (xiv), but also about social differences and class feeling. How, she asks, do we align Woolf’s public sympathy with the lives of obscure women with her “private recoil” (203)? As Raymond Williams observes, those in Bloomsbury, like Virginia Woolf “were a true fraction of the existing English upper class. They were at once against its dominant ideas and values and still willingly, in all immediate ways, part of it. It is a very complex and delicate position” (Williams 236).

In this absorbing study, which weaves fiction, literary criticism and social history-reaching poetry, at times—Light illuminates not only the personal lives of servants working in Bloomsbury but the cultural history of servants in England between the wars. She offers fascinating information about domestic service that was largest single female occupation in England until 1945, orphans and charity girls being a large part of service.

The aim of the book is moral re-dress: “to give the servants back their dignity and the respect they deserve” (xvii). It is organized into four sections each focusing on the life of a particular servant in the context of Bloomsbury and the social history of domestics in England: Chapter 1 focuses on Sophie Farrell, “The Family Treasure,” who joined the Stephen family in 1886 when Woolf was four years old. She served for fifty years, knew Woolf’s mother and was a valued link with the past; Chapter 2, “Housemaid’s Souls,” is the story of Miss Sichel, a do-gooder, and the foundling, Lottie Hope, who became Woolf’s parlor-maid for about thirty years; Chapter 3, “The Question of Nellie,” narrates

1 Ch. 2, 166 n36.
the life of Nellie Boxall who served the Woolfs for eighteen years. Her altercations with them about her difficult domestic work, sometimes without water or electricity, as well as her dealings with unsavory sanitary conditions are described; Chapter 4, “Memoirs of a Lavatory Attendant,” deals with Woolf’s speculations about the life of a lavatory attendant, the shift in role illustrating how women who were once servants moved into the professions in the 1930s with the increasing democratization of British society.

In the context of British attitudes toward servants, Bloomsbury distinguished itself somewhat. Distinctions must be made and contradictions noted. Some, notably Leonard Woolf, were declared socialists with progressive social views; others in the group had feminist sympathies or held egalitarian principles. Virginia Woolf relates to her lower-class servants as “a matter of conscience: not in solidarity, nor in affiliation” (Williams 236). She benefited from their service yet, in her diary, blamed the “system” and her parents’ generation for creating it. Like many of the female writers that Tillie Olsen highlights in Silences, Woolf depended on other women to cook and clean so that she could write. Women’s independence was a plank in her platform of life and aesthetics but, as Light notes, it was Nellie who drew the curtains and cleaned the chamber pots.

Caregiving, even today, is a complex relationship. There were times when Woolf was ill and needed a great deal of care.

When Lottie Hope and Nellie Boxall arrived from Durbins in Feb. 1916,…Nellie was twenty-five and Lottie a year younger; their mistress ten years their senior but clearly still needing a great deal of care….The household revolved around the routines which made it possible for her to write and keep her mental equilibrium; regular meals, a rest after lunch, not too many visitors, no late nights. (134)

Yet in later, healthier times, Woolf chafed at the presence of servants, particularly Nellie, debating the “cost”:

It is an absurdity, how much time L. & I have wasted in talking about servants. And it can never be done with because the fault lies in the system. How can an uneducated woman let herself in, alone, into our lives?—what happens is that she becomes a mongrel; and has no roots any where. (176)

Embarassing racial overtones of half-breed and rubbish hover over Woolf’s inner struggle about integrating a servant of a different class into her and Leonard’s daily life.

Light asserts that the figure of the obscure working woman “haunts Woolf’s experiments in literary modernism” (xx). It is a social and literary issue that persists today as Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn assert in their new book, Half the Sky. Western feminism, they claim, is haunted by the struggle for gender equality in the developing world. We observe this directly as nannies from Bhutan, Nepal and the Caribbean enter into service with Western families.

But what were the literary consequences of Woolf’s attitude toward servants? Is it true that Woolf’s lack of knowledge about the physical and inner lives of working women (that she acknowledges) and her shadowy representations “set a limit” (xx) to what she could achieve in her fiction, as Light asserts? Never one to proselytize about the “servant question” in art, she nevertheless presents a powerful, sympathetic and, sometimes, comic, literary image of a servant in Mrs. McNab in To the Lighthouse. For as Woolf notes in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” “on or about 1910,” the Georgian cook emerged like a Leviathan, the aroused mythical sea monster, into the drawing room and into middle-class Victorian consciousness. This was a consciousness reflected in Woolf’s honest and frequent examination of her feelings toward servants—unusual for her time—in her diary. Apocalyptic images haunt the “Time Passes” section of her novel—like the Leviathan and blood, darkness, storm and fire—and suggest but never detail the actual lives and rebellion of the working class, the servants or miners. Mrs. McNab will emerge from the darkness of the Victorian house, end her “waiting” on others, and choose the new post-war options of education and access to factory work, waitress, chambermaid, florist, and beautician positions. New opportunities, household appliances and attitudes toward class, family, the education of women and domestic work would alter her role.

Since “the imagination is largely the child of the flesh,” Woolf acknowledges that she cannot embody the knowledge or capture the inner life of working women in her writing: “because one’s body had never stood at the wash-tub; one’s hands had never wrung and scrubbed.” (Introductory Letter xxi). And so she does not come to a conclusion about “the true nature of women,” in general, and working-class women, in particular (AROO 6). She does not risk patronizing or romanticizing them. They remain shadowy or blank as a kind of moral challenge to the reader, a reminder of the suffering beings not yet culturally or psychologically known or realized in life or fiction.

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These new additions to the versatile Bloomsbury Heritage series from Cecil Woolf range from the global to the personal in the life and work of Virginia Woolf, covering topics ranging from weather to Rodmell to music. Each adds a dimension to our understanding of Woolf and the world in which she lived.

Beginning with a non-event in her account of Woolf’s fascination with and use of weather, Paula Maggio’s Reading the Skies in Virginia Woolf opens with the following words, suggesting that in itself, weather is a matter of both chance and circumstance: “Virginia Woolf missed the Great Victorian Blizzard of 18 January 1881 by a year and one week” (5). Woolf’s belief in the influences of nature on culture and the relationship between them is examined first in several essays, linking the Victorians’ wordiness to English wetness in “A Talk About Memoirs” to the idea in “On Not Knowing Greek” that the English can’t fully grasp Sophocles without understanding the Greek climate. While Woolf relates weather to her own moods and mental well-being in her diaries, she goes further in evocative descriptions and a keen understanding of its capacity to affect human life in general. Maggio observes that in linking the ordinary, weather, with the extraordinary, war, “[s]he illustrates her theory that life is made up of both, and both are essential to creating a cohesive artistic whole” (20).

In Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse, the weather asserts itself immediately: the fine day enables Clarissa Dalloway to go out to buy flowers for her party and the trip to the lighthouse is dependent upon fair weather. In Orlando, the weather provides continuity and significance to each period as Orlando adapts to changes both in weather and in life. Because Woolf was attentive to the minutest details of everyday life and the natural world, it is no surprise that the weather plays a critical role in her work, and while I would have liked to see all of the novels addressed, The Waves in particular, and more scrutiny of the diaries, Maggio’s monograph opens our eyes, encouraging greater scrutiny of climatic conditions in Woolf’s work on our own.

As may be seen in her extensive references, Julie Singleton has taken on an ambitious task in A History of Monks House and the Village of Rodmell. Quiet and isolated, Rodmell was a retreat from hectic London, and Woolf did much of her work at Monks House from 1919 until her death in 1941. The surrounding countryside and the South Downs were virtually her back yard, and her walks energized her and stimulated her writing. In this portrait of the village and house from their earliest days, we learn that Leonard’s bee-keeping continued a tradition started more than a hundred years earlier by the Glazebrook family, occupants of Monks House for more than eighty years. Jacob Verrall, the next owner, established the foundation of the Monks House garden, and his sister kept diaries with details of daily life and the house itself.

The Woolfs made additions and improvements—the 1929 annex that included Virginia’s room is described as “a rather unsightly extension” (11), while the room itself is “light and airy with panoramic views of the Downs; as much a part of the garden as the house” (47). The furnishings, decorations, and ambiance illustrate a household where pleasure and creativity dominated over stuffiness and order. Part of a larger work, the prose is a bit choppy at times, and with the mention of many houses in the village, past and present, a village map would have been useful. But a few minor shortcomings don’t detract from its value for readers of Woolf with an historic bent and those like myself who know and love Rodmell for its own charms as well as because of its most famous resident.

Resulting in increasing degrees of separation, first-hand accounts of Virginia and Leonard Woolf have diminished over time. So, we are fortunate indeed at Cecil Woolf’s discovery of Diana Gardner’s memoirs, from which The Rodmell Papers: Reminiscences of Virginia and Leonard Woolf by a Sussex Neighbor were taken. Gardner, who died in 1997, wrote fiction before turning to painting (several of her woodcuts are reproduced in this monograph) and then wrote her memoirs between the 1970s and 1990s. An early section of the monograph, “A Train Journey with Virginia Woolf,” describes a trip in which the young Diana, “an adulating admirer” (14), shares a carriage with Woolf. They become more acquainted over the following years, which she writes about in two other pieces, but a kind of idol-worship continues to define their relationship; while Virginia treats Diana kindly, she refers to her in a diary entry as “silly” (9). In other pieces, Gardner recalls Leonard Woolf, whom she found more approachable and came to see herself accepted as a friend after Virginia’s death.

Hindsight from the distance of more than thirty years can lend itself to embroidery as well as divination. Combining the atmosphere during the war with Woolf’s tendencies, Gardner posits that “Such stress combined with the usual exhaustion which invariably followed the completion of a book led on inevitably [emphasis mine] to thoughts of suicide” (35). Frequently sighting Woolf walking along the river towpath, she claims to be able to “read the mood of the solitary walker” from the road a quarter-mile away, and to detect whether she was relaxed or anxious (36). And in the winter of 1940, Gardner “had the vision of a woman walking alone near water, perhaps with the idea of death in her mind” (39). These accounts are a charming and welcome addition to the body of personal recollections and narrative, however many grains of salt are needed to bring the picture into balance.

From the weather to village life to private pastimes—Emilie Crapoulet’s Virginia Woolf: A Musical Life shows us how critical music was to her life and work. I was fascinated with the compilation of Woolf’s use of the language of music to describe her work: wishing she could write “four lines at a time…as a musician does” (3); “I want a Chorus, a general statement, a song for 4 voices” (6) for the ending of The Years; and for Mrs. Dalloway, “knitting together everything & ending on three notes” (6).

Virginia and Vanessa Stephen had a musical childhood, with piano and singing lessons, as was typical for their time and class. Augmented by frequent attendance at concerts and recitals, the regular presence of recorded music at home, and the influence of friends like Ethel Smyth and Roger Fry, Woolf developed sufficient understanding of musical technique to incorporate it into reviews, essays and stories. She believed, however, that amateurs might not be able to do justice in writing about music, and Crapoulet observes that “If writing about music is unsatisfactory, Woolf still found that music was an art which directly inspired her own literary compositions, playing a central role in her work as a writer” (25). She noted the relationship between writing and music in her essay “Street Music” and continued to explore the associations, thinking she might like to write a book on the subject.

1 For pricing, contact Cecil Woolf Publishers / 1 Morningstar Place / London NW1 7RP / England or at <cecilwoolf@gmail.com>.
The monograph is written in one continuous narrative and bounces among times and topics, so it would have been more accessible with sections to separate Woolf’s personal musical experiences and influences from its place in her writing and in specific work. But Crapoulet has synthesized myriad streams and states her conclusions succinctly: “The musicality of Woolf’s own novels is undeniable and is underpinned by her knowledge and experience of music, her explicit interest in the relations between music and literature and the numerous references she makes in her diaries and letters to the way music influences her writing” (30).

We must thank Cecil Woolf for these gems and for further enriching our understanding of Virginia and Leonard Woolf and their milieu in the city and in the country, under fair skies and in stormy weather, and with songs in their heart.

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REVIEWS
WELL-BEHAVED WOMEN SELDOM MAKE HISTORY

UNCOMMON ARRANGEMENTS: SEVEN PORTRAITS OF MARRIED LIFE IN LONDON LITERARY CIRCLES: 1910-1939

These are books by women and about women. The first, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History is the more scholarly of the two, and, for my money, the more intellectually satisfying. It is also the better read—and not only because of its acknowledged debt to Virginia Woolf. Written by the Pulitzer-prize winning author of A Midwife’s Tale, the book is dedicated “to [her] students,” contains full scholarly apparatus, and, as one blurb says, is “a tribute to the women who have made history as well as the scholars who write about them” (back cover), including Virginia Woolf as one of three women who play a major role. The second, Katie Roiphe’s Uncommon Arrangements: Seven Portraits of Married Life in London Literary Circles 1910-1939, lacks incisive scholarly apparatus and admits in Acknowledgements that the author’s “own work was primarily an act of synthesis, of putting together different points of view and sorting through details, to get the stories [she] wanted to tell, and [she] would not have been able to attempt this work without the excellent scholarship on these writers and artists” (333-334; emphasis added). This is, of course, fair enough—and is the author’s prerogative, assuming there is no misrepresentation or factual error. However, called to task (or given a gentle slap on the wrist) for “historical inaccuracies” in one otherwise “GOOD” review, Roiphe’s book lacks the seriousness of the first, and its glib tone is (at least for this reviewer) sometimes difficult to abide. Including only summary “notes” and a “selected bibliography” of mostly secondary sources, it is odd that so many of the reviews discovered at the on-line site refer to evidence of assiduous research.

Ulrich honors and appreciates Woolf in obvious and subtle ways (two of her chapters are named “Shakespeare’s Daughters” and “Waves”), while Woolf plays a supporting role in Uncommon Arrangements and only by association with the married lives in the title. In fact, Woolf shows up in almost all of the marriages the book is about, and particularly those of Katherine Mansfield & John Middleton Murry, Ottoline & Philip Morrell, and Vanessa & Clive Bell. The other uncommon couples are H.G. & Jane Wells (Rebecca West takes up a lot of the first chapter named for them), Elizabeth Von Arnim & John Francis Russell, Radclyffe Hall & Una Troubridge, and Vera Brittain & George Gordon Catlin, the amplersands [Roiphe’s] adding to the jolly tone. One can understand the omission of the Woolfs in her “portraits of married life in London literary circles” (after all, they’ve gotten a lot of attention already and, as already noted, it is the writer’s prerogative to write about whomever she chooses), but the absence of both primary sources and footnotes seems to me suspect. One must wonder, for example, about the (uncited) source that supports the presumed resurrection not only of Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), but also of Roger Fry (1866-1934), in time to bring Ottoline Morrell flowers in 1937 as she “lay dying” [212].

In explaining the title of her book, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, for whom historical inaccuracy is anathema and who in fact says that “history… is a primary way of creating meaning” (xxxiii), muses that she was used to seeing the first line from a scholarly article she wrote in 1976 (and now the title of the book under review) reproduced on bumper stickers, t-shirts, and tote bags (not unlike the words of Virginia Woolf). When she “wrote that ‘well-behaved women seldom make history’ [she] was making a commitment to help recover the lives of otherwise obscure women’ (xxxiii), not unlike Woolf herself. In Ulrich’s book, Woolf is in good company (with fifteenth-century writer Christine de Pizan and nineteenth-century suffragette Elizabeth Candy Stanton), and of the three epigraphs informing the work, Woolf’s has particular resonance for readers of the Miscellany:

For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children set to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it. And the novels, without meaning to, inevitably lie. (AROO 89)

Committed to historical and biographical accuracy, Ulrich speaks to the “intriguing parallels in the lives of the three writers” in the section of her introduction labeled “Three Writers Making History”: all grew up with conflicting signals about learning; all were married to intellectually supportive husbands; all lived through wars and deaths of loved ones; and, “[i]n their work and in their lives,…[u]sing stories about the past to challenge history, they talked back to books” (9).

The story that Roiphe wants to tell is less concerned with these challenges than with “Marriage à la Mode” (the title of her introduction, which she admits to “borrow[ing]” from Mansfield’s short story [1]), and what one critic called “the selfish and arrogant people who populate this book” (Philadelphia Inquirer, “Critical Summary,” Entrepreneur 2).

1 In Uncommon Arrangements, Entrepreneur Magazine prints a “critical summary” of the Philadelphia Inquirer: “Despite a few historical inaccuracies and questionable assumptions, critics considered Roiphe’s perceptive exploration of unconventional marriages in the early 20th century a success.” One of the “few historical inaccuracies” is resurrecting Lytton Strachey in time for him to bring flowers and books to Ottoline Morrell on her deathbed in 1938. According to “Martin Rubin,” reviewing the book for the LA Times, “That would have been quite a trick on his part and might even have made her sit up, since he had been dead for more than six years by then.” This may explain why, as Rubin says, Roiphe is “[n]ever didactic” (Entrepreneur Magazine). See Entrepreneur.com (Entrepreneur Media, Inc.) for a sampling: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/172802440.html>.
Because this is her focus, of course, Roiphe excludes anything beyond a mention of serious work or anything other than arch characterizations, the chapter on “Vanessa & Clive Bell” (which also includes a photo of Duncan Grant on the first page [143]), for example, being largely “lush appearance” (151). To end the first part of this chapter Roiphe chooses to quote from Roger Fry: “‘It really is an almost ideal family based as it is on adultery and mutual forbearance with Clive the deceived husband and me the abandoned lover. It really is rather a triumph of reasonableness over the conventions’” (149). However, there is no source cited here, although she does acknowledge listening at the feet of Frances Spalding and claims Phyllis Rose’s “incomparable Parallel Lives” as an inspiration in the back matter (234), where the acknowledgements, the summary “notes,” and the selected bibliography are filed, the placement probably the publisher’s convention. While absence of sources and dismissive placement are annoying (her habit of using of surnames to refer her male characters, and her insistence on referring to women using given names is, to me, particularly irksome), her summary notes also lack authority and reliability, her reference to Janet Malcolm’s “superb essay on the subject” (“Notes” 324) is, presumably, “A House of One’s Own” from the New Yorker—though nothing by Malcolm is listed in the selected bibliography—and the unnamed work is mistakenly credited to the New York Review of Books. Not a major gaffe, but perhaps representative of a kind of an overall laxity.

So, it would seem, you pay just about the same amount of money, and you take your chances. While Ulrich’s work may find provenance in a bumper sticker, it adds meaning and substance to women’s history. On the other hand, Roiphe, lacking comparable substance and accuracy, uses words from T.S. Eliot’s (unidentified) “famous poem” to close her book: “‘These fragments have I shored against my ruin’” (303). And, in concluding, she says, “In some sense the instinct to record is the instinct to keep, to hold in a tangible way, these passing moments of heightened experience; it is the instinct not to die” (303). In a less metaphysical and more down to earth (and elegant) closing, Ulrich says: “Well-behaved women make history when they do the unexpected, when they create and preserve records, and when later generations care” (Ulrich 229). I care and so, I think, would Virginia Woolf, who spent a lifetime doing the unexpected—and, also making history.

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2 See also, page 5, where Roiphe claims to use Strachey’s Eminent Victorians as “[her] model, along with Phyllis Rose’s brilliant tour de force of domestic archeology, Parallel Lives.”

3 For those who may wonder, the “famous poem” in question is The Waste Land.

REVIEW
MODERNISM, MEMORY, AND DESIRE: T. S. ELIOT AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

As the first full-length book treatment of Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot, Gabrielle McIntire’s Modernism, Memory, and Desire naturally commands attention. Choosing not to tread the familiar ground of biographical and influence studies, McIntire instead offers a thematic exploration of the associations between personal, sensual memory and the larger modernist task of re-creating the cultural past. Her reassessment of the importance and inter-relationship of sensuality and desire with memory in the works of Eliot and Woolf marks out some crucial similarities between two artists who have sometimes been presented as being so politically opposed that they cannot be artistically compared and additionally contributes to a developing critical reassessment of Modernism’s debt to the old in making it new.

Scholarship on Eliot and Woolf started out in the 1960s emphasizing thematic connections between the aesthetic philosophies of the two Modernists with critics such as Mary Graham Lund (1960) and Ethel Cornwell (1962) pointing out similarities between Eliot’s concept of the “still point” in the Four Quartets and Woolf’s “moments of being.” In the 70s and 80s there was an increase in biographical studies of influence between the two writers represented by Doris Elder’s 1975 study of “Louis Unmasked: T.S. Eliot in The Waves,” Erwin Steinberg’s thorough comparison between The Waste Land and Mrs. Dalloway, published in 1983, and Lyndall Gordon’s exploration of inward life in the work of Woolf and Eliot, also published the same year, which compared Eliot’s concern with the search for salvation and his concentration on moments of vision with Woolf’s search for hidden patterns in life and her moments of being.

While biographical and influence studies continued throughout the next two decades, including Gillian Beer’s 1990 influential remarks on possible connections between the Four Quartets and Between the Acts and Hermione Lee’s 1997 sketch of Woolf and Eliot’s relationship and the convenient compilation of references to Eliot in Woolf’s diaries and letters in her magisterial biography, during the 1990’s—largely due to the influence of feminist perspectives—treatments of Woolf and Eliot increasingly emphasized the contrasts if not outright conflicts between the two writers. Typical of this trend were Gilbert and Gubar’s remarks on Eliot’s murderous misogyny (1988) and Bonnie Kime Scott’s review of his complicated and conflicted attitude towards modernist women writers (1995), as well as a series of critiques of Woolf and Eliot’s attitudes towards impersonality by Caroline Webb (1997), Lisa Low (1998), and Michael Kaufman (1998).

The most recent critical considerations of Eliot and Woolf seem to be turning back to a comparative mode. Jed Esty’s A Shrinking Island (2004) returns to a consideration of the writers’ later works, examining how Woolf and Eliot both participated in the post-WWI shift from a cosmopolitan and metropolitan high modernism to a more nativist and insular emphasis on English culture, as seen particularly in Woolf’s Between the Acts and “Anon” and Eliot’s The Rock and Four Quartets.
McIntire’s treatment of Eliot and Woolf is in line with this latest comparative trend, coming full circle back to the earliest purely thematic studies of Eliot and Woolf in that it largely eschews biographical connections between the two writers and concentrates on their inner lives. The book is composed of an Introduction, seven chapters, and an Epilogue; the first four chapters deal with Eliot, the last three with Woolf. Chapters are more thematically than chronologically arranged. Chapter 1 presents Eliot’s series of “pornotropic” poems about the colonial encounter between Columbo (Christopher Columbus) and the King and Queen of Cuba (“King Bolo and his Big Black Basssturd Kween”), written mostly between 1909 and 1922. The next chapter considers the role of sensual memory in The Waste Land, “Gerontion,” and the short prose poem “Hysteria.” Chapter 3 deals with poems more explicitly about eros and the body, circling back to “Prufrock” and looking ahead to “Ash Wednesday” and “Burnt Norton.” Chapter 4 concentrates on Eliot’s partisan battle for control of the literary past, particularly in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” The chapters on Woolf begin in mid-career with a discussion of Woolf’s attitude towards biography and its relation to desire, particularly in Orlando, with some attention to her remarks on the genre in her non-fictional prose. Chapter 6 focuses on autobiography, beginning with “A Sketch of the Past” and a long excursion into Woolf’s probable knowledge of Freud and winding up with a brief encounter with To the Lighthouse. The final chapter on Woolf moves from the making of personal history to the remaking of cultural history, centering on how Woolf’s need for a communal vision of history is represented through the interaction of place and literary allusion in Between the Acts.

This summarizing recitation of the contents of McIntire’s chapters does not capture the theoretical variety and vivacity that is the book’s chief achievement. Reading both Eliot and Woolf through the lens provided by contemporaneous theorists of memory and history such as Freud, Proust, Benjamin and Nietzsche, McIntire also draws freely on a rather astonishing range of contemporary poststructuralist, post-colonialist, and space/place theorists to support her basic thesis that Eliot and Woolf “each separately fashion a poetics of memory where translating one’s experience of remembrance and historicity to textuality…occurs by concurrently exploring the erotic and the sensual” (3). For Eliot scholarship, this represents a helpful reminder of the sensual humanity of a figure too often portrayed as an “asexual, straight, anglo-Catholic, white, prudish, ‘high’ Modernist” (7). For Woolf criticism, McIntire’s accomplishment is less original, since Woolf’s reliance on personal sensory memory and her consistent battle to re-imagine the past into the present has been pretty thoroughly documented. What McIntire does add is a broader theoretical context in which to set these insights.

Although McIntire’s book illuminates the interrelationship of memory, desire, and history in Eliot and Woolf and certainly suggests the applicability of a variety of new critical approaches, a number of the issues it opens up will need further exploration. Dealing with the series of Columbo and Bolo poems, only a few of which have ever been published or commented upon (see Scott 114), the first chapter presents the most original research. While McIntire certainly succeeds in resettling any image of Eliot as prudish and asexual, the central argument that in these apparently violently racist, misogynist, and homophobic poems Eliot was engaged in a serious critique of Old World colonialism will need to be further tested. Another series of problems is presented by the prevalence of occasionally insufficiently examined Freudian assumptions. For example, in the analysis of Eliot, expressed homosexuality is sometimes too easily conflated with actual homosexuality.

A more serious factual error occurs in McIntire’s treatment of Woolf’s relationship with Freud. In discussing Woolf’s knowledge of Freud, McIntire twice asserts that Woolf set the type for the Hogarth Press edition of Freud’s works (148; 163). Printing of Freud was jobbed out to a professional printer, R. & R. Clark (Willis 107); had Woolf actually set the type of the multi-volume work by hand, she would hardly have had time to write any novels at all. This would be a trivial issue except that McIntire uses this “fact” as proof that Woolf knew Freud’s work more intimately and comprehensively than she allowed herself to remember, attempting to trump quite a long history of informed disagreement on the subject of Freud’s influence.

Despite these reservations, McIntire’s book represents a solid and provocative first step in what one hopes will be a continuing trend in scholarship comparing and contrasting these two important Modernist figures.

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Osborne, Carol “Demolishing the Castle: Virginia Woolf’s Reaction to T. S. Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral.” CEA Critic 70.3 (Spring-Summer 2008): 46-55.
In Chapter 1, Gan investigates privacy in the domestic space of the home. Where could women find “a room of their own” in patriarchal houses? If in the nineteenth century privacy was available only in the “interstices of social discourse” in Austen’s drawing rooms (20), in the modernist period potentially private spaces might be found in the solitude of the garden or the study. For Gan, “Woolf is representative of a new generation that is more aware of the politics of domestic space and the importance of privacy in spatial form” (25). Gan analyzes the profoundly gendered spaces of 22 Hyde Park Gate and, drawing on Christopher Reed’s Bloomsbury Rooms, contrasts them with the interiors designed by Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell. Of particular interest in this chapter is Gan’s brief history of gardens and gardening as an accepted career for women in the early twentieth century. Gardens, however, while offering women space for contemplation, still had “porous borders” (37) and were ultimately owned by men. The space which offered the best solution for privacy (at least for some women) was the study, as Woolf illustrates in A Room of One’s Own, where rooms have a “hybrid function” that provides both “solitude” and “sociability” (42). Gan argues that the spaces described in A Room of One’s Own are matched by the rhetorical inclusiveness of the text, which enables Woolf both to “allow (and yet control) access to her private world” (45).

In Chapter 2, Gan segues from the gardens of Chapter 1 to the city with the words of Elizabeth Lynn Linton (1862): “If [a woman] knows how to walk in the streets, self-possessed and quietly…she is for the most part as safe as if planting tulips…in her own garden” (47). This quotation also brings to mind Deborah Parsons and Janet Wolff’s argument that the anonymity and the presence of crowds allow women to venture safely out into the city. They can occupy “a bubble of mobile private space” (48) and function as “flâneuses” who direct their gazes out at the city rather than being only the object of the male gaze. In Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa’s “sense of being herself invisible” (Woolf 10) is not a loss of identity but an “urban mantle of privacy” (56). In “Street Haunting,” Gan notes that the oyster shell covering the soul is needed not in the city streets, but in the patriarchal home.

Although Gan’s historical research in this chapter is thorough, as she develops her discussion of urban anonymity from Georg Simmel to Walter Benjamin to Parsons, she could have cited Susan Squier’s Virginia Woolf and London: the Sexual Politics of the City in her comments on “Street Haunting,” as Squier makes the same point about masculine identity prevailing in the home in that text (Squier 51). Another place of privacy in the city is the car and in her discussions of Woolf’s “Evening over Sussex: Reflections on a Motor-Car” and Orlando, Gan agrees with Andrew Thacker that Woolf uses “the car to produce ‘a kaleidoscopic sense of the modern self’” and with Makiko Minow-Pinkney that new technologies such as the car alter perception and disrupt earlier senses of order (73), but Gan suggests that those readings “elide the later act of consolidation that also occurs in the car” (73) and that the car can also be “an important space of respite and repose” (74).

Gan’s final three chapters, each with its own allure, focus on aspects of the country. Chapter 3 analyzes the witch and the primitive as possible, but not always successful, escapes from domesticity for women in novels by Sylvia Townsend Warner and Rose Macaulay. Chapter 4 chronicles the development of leisure and holidays for working-class and middle-class women. Chapter 5 discusses adultery as a symbol of the fragility of the suburban private home in some well-known criminal cases and in the fiction of Daphne du Maurier, E. M. Delafield and Rosamond Lehmann. But it is the combination of careful historical and cultural analysis and astute readings of Woolf’s essays and novels, as well as other texts,
that makes Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century British Writing well worth reading and possibly even owning (although one does gulp at the high price of Palgrave books, despite the beautiful covers).

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When did I stop seeing Duncan as my brother’s lover and begin to fall in love with him myself? I think it was at first very early weekend, when Adrian brought him to Asheham, and I watched him painting in the garden….There was an intensity about his concentration that communicated itself….As I began to paint, our movements fell into the same pattern. There was no rivalry, only the shared sense of a common pursuit. Not since those far-off days with Thoby in the nursery had I felt so at one with another human being. I could not help falling in love.

The fact of Vanessa’s love for Duncan Grant reverberates throughout the novel; it becomes one emotional thread in the tapestry Vanessa is weaving in order to understand herself and her sister.

In terms of the known facts of these lives, Sellers creates a work that is as accurate as any of the biographies she relies on. But, in style, form, and the notion of truth it incorporates, the work takes its cue from postmodern notions of human subjectivity and, in particular, from Helene Cixous’s analysis of the “feminine.” In “Virginia Woolf’s Diaries and Letters,” Sellers argues that “[p]ostmodern theory offers a rewarding frame from which to read Woolf’s diaries and letters” (116). She traces in the diaries Woolf’s quest for “a new form for her writing” (Sellers 117), her desire to “give the moment whole; whatever it includes” (Woolf Diary 3: 209; qtd. in Sellers 117), and argues that the “uncorrected writing of the diaries and letters may…have come closer [than the more carefully formed fiction and non-fiction] to the inclusive ideal Woolf envisioned: “something swifter & lighter & more colloquial & yet intense: more to the point & less composed; more fluid...
& following the flight” (Woolf, D5: 298; qtd. in Sellers, “Diaries” 117-18). Sellers perceives a very close parallel between what Woolf achieved in her diaries and letters and Helene Cixous’ definition of writing that is “feminine,” which, according to Sellers, “recognizes that there is no universal truth or neutral truth, and that one’s perspective is necessarily filtered through one’s needs, desires, questions, prejudices and fears” (119). Every fact Sellers includes in Vanessa and Virginia has been “filtered through [the] needs, desires, questions, prejudices and fears” of Vanessa. By embracing the notion of what “feminine” writing can be and do, Sellers has constructed a work that seems, in the eyes of this reviewer, to be capable of sustaining the “high degree of tension which gives us reality” (Woolf, “Art of Biography” 197).

Vanessa and Virginia is the story of a relationship between two artists who were both “conspirators” and antagonists. In the opening scene of the novel, Vanessa lies in the grass with her brother Thoby: “I feel the weight of his head against my ribs. His hair is golden in the sunlight and as I look up I see the blazing whiteness of an angel.” But in the next moment, “[a] shadow falls. My angel disappears. I recognize your snake-green eyes” (Sellers 1-2). And Thoby is lured away by the “daredevil” Virginia (2). This sense of threat posed by the clever sister—the “devil” to Vanessa’s “saint” (13)—is balanced throughout by Vanessa’s consciousness that: “[w]e became each other’s mirrors….To this day, when I read it is your voice and not mine that I hear, your pitch inflecting the thoughts that beat in my ear as I drift to sleep (15)…. [M]y existence was not separate from yours” (52). But even this sense of tension is never static: we are continually reminded that Vanessa herself is ambivalent, uncertain, wavering in her judgment concerning her own needs, fears, strengths, and culpabilities: “In a way I do not fully understand, I think your madness spared me….It was as if your visions and as I look up I see the blazing whiteness of an angel.” But in the next moment, “[a] shadow falls. My angel disappears. I recognize your snake-green eyes” (Sellers 1-2). And Thoby is lured away by the “daredevil” Virginia (2). This sense of threat posed by the clever sister—the “devil” to Vanessa’s “saint” (13)—is balanced throughout by Vanessa’s consciousness that: “[w]e became each other’s mirrors….To this day, when I read it is your voice and not mine that I hear, your pitch inflecting the thoughts that beat in my ear as I drift to sleep (15)…. [M]y existence was not separate from yours” (52). But even this sense of tension is never static: we are continually reminded that Vanessa herself is ambivalent, uncertain, wavering in her judgment concerning her own needs, fears, strengths, and culpabilities: “In a way I do not fully understand, I think your madness spared me….It was as if your visions stood in for my own feelings, enabling me to go on with my life” (44-45).

Because we view the world of the novel through the eyes of a visual artist, events and relationships are rendered as shapes, tones, patterns of color. And actual (and imagined) paintings by Vanessa are seen as both formal structures and psychological projections that shift continually and communicate, therefore, a sense that they are still in the process of being formulated:

A wall of orange ablaze in the sun, the glow of hot coals. My colors have the sheen of silk, the rough texture of Hessian….I have had too many years of cloying detail. What interests me is the impact of the color. I want the immediate sensation, the unbroken panorama of shape and tone as you first enter a room. (50-51)

The figure in the foreground has her back to us. While it is clear that she is the presiding presence in the picture, there is another figure opposite her, which, once we have seen it, barters for our attention. The face of this second figure is solemn, judgmental, domineering….As I reconsider the painting today, I am shocked by its starkness. The face of this second figure is solemn, judgmental, domineering….As I reconsider the painting today, I am shocked by its starkness. The face of this second figure is solemn, judgmental, domineering….As I reconsider the painting today, I am shocked by its starkness.

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It seems clear that Sellers is attempting to capture the truth as it might have been experienced by Vanessa Bell: “If this were a work of fiction,” she has Vanessa say, “then Stella’s death, coming so soon after Mother’s, would seem like malicious overload on the writer’s part” (35). But Sellers’ definition of truth resembles that of Helene Cixous. It is not neutral or universal. It is filtered through the consciousness of a character who is trying to sift through a lifetime of memories in an effort to comprehend what they did—or could—mean.
It's worth noting that critics have largely ignored the aesthetic charge author cannot help herself from reiterating her own political ideology: literature to augment the author's claim. However, after laying out the class obligingly agrees with this premise and finds passages in the book, and queries, for example, the relationship between art and the environment for individual and social change. The author concludes this section with a strikingly honest question: “are we, like Clarissa Dalloway, embarrassingly deluded in our vague sense that the aesthetic experiences of this novel, and of this summer, will somehow be for the good?” (93). Depending on how one defines “good” (ah, there’s the rub!) I cannot imagine that the outcome will not be for the greater good. Finally, however, although I don’t always agree with the authors or the methodology of teaching beauty, I still found the ideas provocative and oddly refreshing.

In all fairness, Green-Lewis (or Soltan) asks some excellent questions in the barn, and queries, for example, the relationship between art and the world, between the aesthetic and the need for moral transformation. The author and the class posit that Clarissa Dalloway’s love of beauty matters and they investigate how this value informs the novel; does the concept of beauty initiate action? Yes, the author decides, beauty does lead to common ground and it fosters public exchange (88). Thus, teaching the aesthetics of beauty through the novels of Virginia Woolf creates the environment for individual and social change. The author concludes this section with a strikingly honest question: “are we, like Clarissa Dalloway, embarrassingly deluded in our vague sense that the aesthetic experiences of this novel, and of this summer, will somehow be for the good?” (93). Depending on how one defines “good” (ah, there’s the rub!) I cannot imagine that the outcome will not be for the greater good. Finally, however, although I don’t always agree with the authors or the methodology of teaching beauty, I still found the ideas provocative and oddly refreshing.

Jennifer Green-Lewis and Margaret Soltan make a lovely case for teaching literature through the aesthetic lens of beauty. They write, “The monk, the scientist, the poet, the composer, and the novelist all recognize the centrality of beauty to the profundity of human experience” (21). This text, Teaching Beauty in Delillo, Woolf, and Merrill is not an average “how-to-teach” practicum, but instead fits snugly into the humanistic tradition of positing a theory, in this case a methodology for creating a more meaningful relationship between novel and reader, and then testing the theory. Unlike Danell Jones’ The Virginia Woolf Writers’ Workshop: Seven Lessons to Inspire Great Writing, which invites readers to imagine Woolf as a creative writing teacher and learn from her expertise, this book asks more questions than it answers. In order to experiment with their theory, the authors draw from three distinct classes who have agreed to read though the theoretical lens of “beauty” in vastly different settings. Structuring the text with three introductory chapters on their theoretical underpinnings for teaching beauty in the college classroom, they subsequently demonstrate the practice of this theory through three case studies: “‘Beauty Anyhow’: Reading Virginia Woolf in Vermont,” “Beauty and Balance: James Merrill on Santorini,” and “Beauty after 9/11: Don Delillo in New York.” Readers of the Miscellany will be most interested in the chapter on Woolf.

Green-Lewis and Soltan plead their cause for a return to teaching beauty by arguing against faculty who “value literary texts only to the extent that they affirm the student’s ethnic or gender identity” (38). They document their frustration with undergraduate Creative Writing students, for example, who value each other’s writing with the same ethos that they read Woolf. The authors plead that “a sense of beauty, and with it a sense of the ‘literary’ itself, may be returned to literary studies” (41). While I think that many scholars would wholeheartedly agree with this claim, the question of structure and process remains.

To illustrate this theory in motion, “‘Beauty Anyhow’: Reading Virginia Woolf in Vermont” chronicles the experience of one of the authors (it is not clear which one) discussing Mrs. Dalloway with seventeen “teachers” (and it is not clear whom) in what I assume is a summer course in a barn in Vermont. The class engages with the aesthetic of beauty in the novel, and the author finds that “beauty plots the novel and provides it with its impetus forward and backward” (72), while the class obligingly agrees with this premise and finds passages in the literature to augment the author’s claim. However, after laying out the need for a “return” to beauty in teaching Woolf in the early chapters, the author cannot help herself from reiterating her own political ideology: “It’s worth noting that critics have largely ignored the aesthetic charge of Woolf’s work in favor of an overemphasis on the feminism of her oeuvre. I say overemphasis because it’s not for her politics that Woolf’s work deserves its place in the canon. Her defenders would have a much stronger case to make if they focused instead on the glories, as Woolf might say, of the prose itself” (76). And here is where, for me, the practical application of “beauty” becomes murky. If, indeed, one “returns” to the aesthetic of beauty, and, along with his or her class, points out what beauty means on an individual and perhaps some sort of collective level, then what’s next? Even the author acknowledges that: “we cannot teach a person to see beauty where she or he cannot see it. What a teacher can do is discover what it is about a work that moves readers and then bring those passages forward for shared scrutiny” (88). But what if a reader finds beauty in some of Woolf’s political passions?


Works Cited
FORTHCOMING IN 2010:

Woolf and the City:
Selected Papers of the 19th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
edited by Elizabeth F. Evans and Sarah Cornish
The volume will be published in both print and electronic form by Clemson University Digital Press

ALSO ANTICIPATED:

Voyages Out, Voyages Home:
Selected Papers of the 11th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
Bangor, North Wales, June 13-16, 2001
edited by Jane de Gay and Marion Dell

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE:

Woolf Editing/Editing Woolf:
Selected Papers of the Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf,
edited by Eleanor McNees and Sara Veglahn
June 2009

Order forms for the print edition of these volumes, 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.

Selected Papers 13, 15-18 and 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 the website of the Center for Virginia Woolf Studies, California State University, Bakersfield, under the auspices of Merry Pawlowski. Go to <http://www.csub.edu/center> for more information.

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International Virginia Woolf Society in Philadelphia 2009
The IVWS website <http://www.utoronto.ca/IVWS> gives a chronology of the rich history of the society's creation. In 1970, J. J. Wilson organized the first panel on Woolf at the Modern Language Association. In the next years, a score of Woolf scholars, led by J. J. and by Morris Beja, worked together to create, first, the newsletter, the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, and, then, a society. Carolyn Heilbrun became the first president in 1976, and the society became an Allied Organization of the MLA.

We still are. And because of our affiliation, at this MLA in Philadelphia, the Society has arranged the following two programs (at the next MLA in January 2011, there will be only one guaranteed IVWS panel):

Monday, 28 December
192. The Uses of Illness: Virginia Woolf and Medical Narrative, organized and chaired by David Eberly
12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Philadelphia Marriott
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, organized and chaired by Elizabeth Outka
12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Philadelphia Marriott
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

In between these panels, we scheduled our annual Party for Tuesday, 29 December, beginning at 6 p.m. Alison Lewis graciously offered her home as the site. Thank you Alison!

MLA 2011
In 2011, we will be gathering at the MLA in Los Angeles from January 6–9. However, MLA has changed its policies regarding Allied organizations (of which IVWS is one). IVWS will now have one panel secured, one panel that IVWS may propose that needs vetting by MLA program committee, and one panel that IVWS may propose in combination with another Allied organization.

The 2011 MLA line up is as follows:
1. Our secure panel, the one which received the most votes in our recent ballot, is “Bloomsbury and Africa.” Welcomed subjects include Woolf’s imaginative uses of Africa, the Dreadnought Hoax, Bloomsbury and African art, Leonard Woolf and Africa, and Hogarth Press publications. Abstracts of 500 words due March 12, 2010, to Danell Jones <danelljones@bresnan.net>.

2. Our proposed panel, the one which came in second place in our voting, is “Sartorial Bloomsbury.” For Bloomsbury, how does clothing function as social coding—for self-fashioning, sexual ambiguity, performance, the avant-garde, even of emancipatory politics? How does fashion shape our understanding of modernity? Abstracts of 500 words due March 12, 2010, to Jane Garrity <Jane.Garrity@Colorado.edu>.

3. A panel with another Allied organization. For this year, I contacted a number of Allied organizations. The International James Joyce Foundation jumped at the chance to propose a panel with us. Other organizations wish to combine forces in future years (and we will discuss procedures for this new opportunity at our annual business meeting in June in Georgetown, KY at the 20th annual Woolf conference).

Anne Fogarty (president of IJJF) and I submitted a panel proposal, “Dirt, Desire, Recollection: James Joyce/Virginia Woolf.” Our goal is to select two papers the address Woolf and two that address Joyce. The panel will have two chairs (one from IJJF and one from IVWS); again, we will discuss procedures at our June business meeting. Here is the call for papers for the panel:

Allied Organizations IJJF and IVWS seek work on Joyce and Woolf individually for combined panel. Send Woolf to Johnston at <johnstgk@slu.edu> and Joyce to Fogarty at <anne.fogarty@ucd.ie>.

Please consider submitting your work to these secure and possible panels.

I hope to have all three panels at the January 2011 MLA and see everyone in Los Angeles!

Georgia Johnston
President, IVWS

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