To the Readers: Eco-Woolf
This “Eco-Woolf” issue of Virginia Woolf Miscellany shows once again the versatility, richness, and continuing relevance of Woolf’s fiction and nonfiction, demonstrating why her readers go back to her novels and essays again and again as our lives and our thinking develop and new topics and questions emerge for us in our particular times and places. Because Woolf’s curiosity was so wide and deep and her concern was about, in her words, “reality” and “life itself,” we find her work speaking to us across gulfs, often wide, of time, class, culture, nationality. I am reminded of novelist Toni Morrison’s definition of “universalism” in literature: that writing which goes most deeply into the particular. Woolf, as Elisa Kay Sparks demonstrates in her contribution to this issue, spent much of her physical, emotional, and imaginative engagement with nature in one relatively small part of the world, the downs of Sussex, yet this engagement participated in modes of being and philosophical questions that have wide significance.

Ecocriticism and ecofeminism are relatively new theoretical and methodological approaches in Woolf studies but have already proved to be fertile avenues into her work. Roots of contemporary critics’ interests in Woolf’s constructions of nature can be traced back at least as far as Josephine O’Brien Schaeffer’s The Three-Fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf while Louise Westling’s discussion of Woolf in The Green Breast of the New World: Landscape, Gender, and American Fiction and “Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World” as well as L. Elizabeth Waller’s “Writing the Real: Virginia Woolf and an Ecology of Language” are important landmarks in the application of ecocriticism and ecofeminism to Woolf’s fiction. More recently, the 20th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf in 2010 marked a coming-of-age of Woolfian ecocriticism as organizer Kristin Czarnecki brought scholars and common readers together to share multiple modes of investigating and appreciating “Woolf and the Natural World.” The two publications that came out of the conference, Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf and the “Woolf and Nature” issue of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, both edited by Kristin Czarnecki, are now required reading in eco-Woolfian studies. Finally, as I write this introduction, University of Virginia Press (a major player in ecocriticism) is now required reading in eco-Woolfian studies.

The collection of essays here represent the work of established as well as up-and-coming eco-critics of Woolf and an exciting diversity of theoretical/critical approaches. Bonnie Kime Scott’s “Virginia Woolf and Critical Uses of Ecofeminism” offers a brief and helpful introduction to ecofeminism and an overview of what applying ecofeminism to Woolf’s writings entails. Warning us away from anachronism (“eco-feminism” as such did not exist in Woolf’s day) but encouraging us to explore the “many ecofeminist possibilities” in Woolf’s texts, Scott outlines some of the major topics and debates, from the authority of Western science to goddess spirituality to post-structural, post-humanist epistemologies. Renée Dickenson sets her analysis of Between the Acts in the context of both ecocriticism and ecofeminism, using foundational eco-critic Laurence Buell’s definitions of “place,” “place-sense,” and “eco-critical text” to argue that the novel functions as an eco-critical text. Dickenson analyzes the “relationships between the land and history; between the land and the female characters . . . ; and . . . between the land and cultural identity” to show how the novel’s “strata of images” create a “geographical subject.”

Mayuko Nakazawa narrows the focus to how Woolf represents a specific part of the natural world, trees, in The Waves. Nakazawa’s meditation on and analysis of the roles of trees in Woolf’s most poetic novel, however, leads to insights about Woolf’s ideas about the development of the individual human being and the evolution of the English as a people. In a similar move from a narrow to a wide focus, Tonya Krouse begins her analysis of The Years with the rain in Rose Pagiter’s death bed scene as an example of how nature in this novel disrupts the momentum of the plot, deflects the human gaze (of both characters and readers), and implicitly critiques patriarchal and colonial social institutions.

In “The Exterminatory Pacifism of Three Guineas,” Christina Alt uses the history of science to inform her analysis of the tension between Woolf’s pacifism and her “combative tone” as she argues against violence. Explaining that scientists such as Charles Elton put the new field of ecology in the service of the war effort as they developed ways of exterminating pests that infested food supplies and damaged crops, she offers a new perspective on Woolf’s metaphor of the dictator as an insect pest, a “caterpillar.” Alt’s analysis draws out both similarities and differences between Woolf’s and fascists’ uses of “exterminatory metaphors.” Rebecca Schisler also addresses violence in Woolf’s work but, rather than focusing on one text, she traces Woolf’s representations of human violence projected upon “nature” and of “nature” itself

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Issue #82—Fall 2012
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“Queer Woolf”

Issue #83—Spring 2013
Sara Sullam and Emily Kopyle
“Virginia Woolf and Literary Genres”

We invite short essays (up to 2500 words) on the relationship between Woolf and literary genre, including the novel, short story, essay as well as poetry, drama, biography, and more specific genres such as lyric, epic, verse drama, elegy, satire, detective fiction. Topics include Woolf’s definition of particular genres, adherence to/challenging generic conventions, blending genres, relationship to writers of a particular genre, and her work’s reception in varied genres.

Sara Sullam <sara.sullam@gmail.com> and Emily Kopyle <emily.kopyle@gmail.com>
Deadline: June 1, 2012

Issue #84—Fall 2013
“Woolf and Animals”

From the animal nicknames she shared with loved ones to the purchase of “a beautiful cat, a Persian cat” with her first earnings as a writer; from the caving rocks in To the Lighthouse to the complex life of Flush to the disturbing animal imagery in Between the Acts; animals play a key role in Woolf’s life and writing. We invite submissions discussing animals in Woolf both fictional and actual. We also welcome articles that align Woolf with animal elements in the work and lives of others. Please send papers of up to 2500 words to:

Kristin Czarnecki <kristin_czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu> and Vara Neverow <neverowv1@southernct.edu>
by February 1, 2013.
as an agent of violence in Jacob’s Room, To the Lighthouse, Orlando, and Between the Acts. Schisler argues that Woolf develops a theory of how “war-ready individuals” are created and how ideologies naturalize violence between human beings, especially men’s violence.

Finally, Elisa Kay Sparks returns us to the biographical and the material in her essay about Woolf’s decades-long life on the Sussex downs. Drawing from Woolf’s diaries and letters, Sparks demonstrates the longevity and depth of Woolf’s emotional, imaginative, and literary responses to the downs, suggesting that for Woolf the downs were a habitat as important as London whose role in Woolf’s life and work has received so much scholarly attention.

Like all good scholarship, the work of the critics in this “Eco-Woolf” issue raises further questions—about “human nature;” the relationship of “inner” and “outer” realities; the degree to which the natural world intervenes in the human cultural world rather than the reverse; the degree to which Woolf’s work replicates or disrupts the Western tradition of exploiting other-than-human nature as a resource, metaphorical and material, for human ends; Woolf’s experience and representation of nature both as violent and as peaceful sanctuary; the degree to which Woolf’s lifelong, evolving interaction with “nature” can inform our lives and our polities today in this time of ecological crisis. I hope you, the readers of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, enjoy reading these essays and pondering these questions as much as I have during the editing of this issue.

Diana L. Swanson
Northern Illinois University

Works Cited

Many thanks to the International Virginia Woolf Society for its generous and continuing support of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany.
American women's literature strives to bridge the gap that still exists between modern British and African-cultural paradigms and to the problems of negotiating between the individual to know her characters, both authors undermine and reject conventional of human experience. With the indirect interior monologues of Woolf and Morrison employ narrative devices that highlight the subjectivity young person’s death prompts others to appreciate life. In terms of style, characters find moments of wholeness in community, and in each work, a and subverting an imperialist, racist, and misogynist status quo. In each work, Dalloway lives and sites of physical and psychic trauma reified amid cityscapes. Of urban life, the novels locate rural environs as the wellspring of characters' after the First World War. Odes to the city that also depict the alienating effects Morrison's the many parallels between Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway (1925) and Toni Morrison's Jazz (1992). Both novels are set in major cities shortly and notably—recall a primordial past, unsettling other characters—think of History in Robert Browning and Virginia Woolf,” in which she brings Early-modernity, in search of a modern poetics. She finds it in the sturdy architecture of Chaucer’s poetry, which she reads within and through the mundane, evocative Paston letters. To Chaucer Woolf ascribes a “solid” art that contains the “actual presence” of nature and that is capable of handling the “common facts” of the present. Certain in his conviction and “too true a poet” to do otherwise, Chaucer leads readers along the road of the present by letting us “go our ways doing the ordinary things with the ordinary people.”

In Woolf’s estimation, Chaucer’s poetry’s morality is therefore the “morality of the novel.” Through his art, he has already “commented upon” what “we are saying, thinking, reading, doing.” As she describes a poetic style by which Chaucer comes “closer to life” than many modern novelists, Woolf also appropriates and applies that style (“Modern Fiction”). Waxing lyrical, Woolf elucidates her essay and “the world of poetry” into a single “here.” Likewise, in her novel, Orlando (1928), Woolf employs Chaucerian poetics in two passages explicitly and humorously concerned with “Life”—a few paragraphs describing, respectively, the labor of biography and of childbirth. In these paragraphs, Woolf uses Chaucerian ambiguity and descriptiveness to convey the “luminous halo” of life (“Modern Fiction”). Thus, Woolf playfully deploys medieval poetics to reinvigorate the modern novel and scaffold her own narrative art.

Next, Barbara Burch presented “What Truth Compels: Redressing the Failures of History in Robert Browning and Virginia Woolf,” in which she brings Robert Browning’s late historical poetry, particularly The Ring and the Book, into conversation with Virginia Woolf’s Flush. The paper argues that Woolf’s representation of Browning as the suave, unapologetic destroyer of Flush’s domestic life obscures the novel’s tacit replication of the creative occasion and major theme of Browning’s poem. Woolf wrote Flush after reading the Brownings’ courtship correspondence as well as a famously celebratory biography of Browning written by the couple’s close friend, Sutherland Orr. Browning’s poem is based on the pleadings and transcripts of a 17th-century murder trial. Although the works are profoundly dissimilar in tone and content, both use primary documents to recover an effaced perspective on historical events and to promote the role of fiction as a necessary corrective to the historical record. Although Professor Burch’s primary purpose is to probe the affinity between Browning’s and Woolf’s work, she also speculates in her paper on why Woolf’s elides this connection. In particular, she argues that Woolf replicates evidence of the novel’s connection to Browning to its introduction and footnotes in order to make Barrett Browning the dominant artistic presence in the text and redress her flagging popularity with 20th-century readers and Modernist literary critics, particularly Ezra Pound.

Lastly, Kristin Czarnecki presented “Navigating the City in Body and Mind: Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway and Toni Morrison’s Jazz,” which explores the many parallels between Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway (1925) and Toni Morrison’s Jazz (1992). Both novels are set in major cities shortly and notably after the First World War. Odes to the city that also depict the alienating effects of urban life, the novels locate rural environs as the wellspring of characters’ lives and sites of physical and psychic trauma reified amid cityscapes. Shadowy female figures in each work—the Battered Woman in Mrs. Dalloway, Wild in Jazz—recall a primordial past, unsettling other characters and subverting an imperialist, racist, and misogynist status quo. In each work, characters find moments of wholeness in community, and in each work, a young person’s death prompts others to appreciate life. In terms of style, Woolf and Morrison employ narrative devices that highlight the subjectivity of human experience. With the indirect interior monologues of Mrs. Dalloway (to borrow Anna Snith’s term) and the narrator of Jazz lamenting her inability to know her characters, both authors undermine and reject conventional notions of narrative authority. Considering Mrs. Dalloway and Jazz together, Czarnecki argues, yields further insights into their authors’ responses to certain cultural paradigms and to the problems of negotiating between the individual and community, the body and mind, in modern urban spaces. Her paper also strives to bridge the gap that still exists between modern British and African-American women’s literature.

For information about the history of the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf as well as the upcoming conferences, go to this Web site: <http://www.home.southernct.edu/~neveroyl/annual_conference_on_virginia_woolf.html>

Consult Paula Maggio’s Web site, Blogging Woolf, for up-to-date information about all things Woolfian including the recently announced Japan-Korea Virginia Woolf Conference in 2013.

THE IVWS & VWS ARCHIVE INFORMATION
<http://library.utoronto.ca/special/F51ivwoolf sociétéfonds.htm>
<http://library.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/f51_intwl_v_woolf_society/>

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

Below is the finding aid for the IVWS archival materials:
<http://library.utoronto.ca/special/F51ivwoolf sociétéfyllelist.htm>

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

With regard to such items as correspondence, memorabilia and photographs, contact the current Archival Liaison, Karen Levenback, either at ivwsarchive@att.net or by surface mail: Karen Levenback, Archival Liaison/IVWS Archive, 304 Philadelphia Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912.
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Even when individual issues are themed, the Miscellany accepts
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at: <neverowv1@southernct.edu>

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Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words at maximum and
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the style of the 6th edition of the MLA Handbook (not the 7th edition
published in 2009). For a copy of the current Miscellany style guide,
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<http://www.home.southernct.edu/~neverowv1/VWM_Online.html>
Previous issues (Fall 1973-Fall 2002) are available in digital
format through EBSCOhost’s
Humanities International Complete
and EBSCOhost’s Literary Reference Center.
More recent issues are also available through through
ProQuest Literature Online (LION) and Gale Group/Cengage.
An Index of the VWM from 1973-2011 is now available from
Susan Devoe at <vwmindex@gmail>
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 financial support from the International Virginia Woolf Society. Issues from Spring 2003 (issue 63) to the present are available in a PDF format at <http://www.home.southernct.edu/~neverowl/VWM_Online.html>.

The IVWS was founded in 1973 as the Virginia Woolf Society. 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. As of 2010, MLA has transitioned to a new format in which the IVWS will continue to have one guaranteed session.

The IVWS website <http://www.utoronto.ca/IVWS/> 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.

The VWoolf 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.

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. For information about the history of the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf, go to <http://www.home.southernct.edu/~neverowl/annual_conference_on_virginia_woolf.html>.

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, will no longer be available on the Center for Woolf Studies website at <http://www.csuh.edu/woolf_center/>. The website is moving to Southern Connecticut State University. (A subscription will be required to access the materials). For information, contact Vara Neverow at <neverowl1@southernct.edu>.

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/>).

Woolfian Resources Online

Virginia Woolf Miscellany:
Issues of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany from Spring 2003 (issue 63) to the present are available in a PDF format at <http://www.home.southernct.edu/~neverowl1/VWM_Online.html>.

The Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
For information about the history of the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf as well as the upcoming conferences is available at: <http://www.home.southernct.edu/~neverowl1/annual_conference_on_virginia_woolf.html>.

Facebook:
The International Virginia Woolf Society is on Facebook! You can become a fan—and you can friend other Woolfians . . .


Blogs:
Visit Paula Maggio’s “Blogging Woolf” at <http://bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com/> for a broad range of valuable information such as key Woolfian resources, current and upcoming events, and an archive of Woolfian doings now past.


Scholarly Resources
Woolf Online: An Electronic Edition and Commentary of Virginia Woolf’s “Time Passes” at <http://www.woolfonline.com/> is a beautifully crafted website dedicated entirely to the middle chapter of Woolf’s To the Lighthouse. Access to the site is free. The material is excellent for scholars but is also highly teachable. One hopes this type of website will be the future of Woolfian texts online. As the website notes, “The initial idea and overall organization of this project was the work of Julia Briggs (1943-2007), in whose memory the project has been completed.”

E-books
The majority of Virginia Woolf’s novels as well as A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas can be read online at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/>. Woolfian Alerts
Have you signed up for Google Alerts? Did you know you could be totally up-to-date on the latest developments in the Woolfian and Bloomsburian world with just a few keystrokes? Check it out! It’s simple, fast and very rewarding.

VWListserv
To join the VWListserv, 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.
To The Readers: Diana Swanson

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How to Join
The International Virginia Woolf Society
<http://www.utoronto.ca/IVWS>

To join, update membership or donate to the International Virginia Woolf Society, please either:

Download the membership form from the IVWS website and mail to the surface address provided or use PayPal online at the IVWS website

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

Student or not full-time employed membership:
12-month membership ($10)
Members of the Society receive a free subscription to the Virginia Woolf Miscellany; updates from the IVWS Newsletter and have access online to an annual Bibliography of Woolf Scholarship and an updated list of members in a password-protected PDF format—the password is provided in the IVWS newsletter. The electronic IVWS distribution list provides early notification of special events, including information about the Annual Woolf Conferences, as well as access to electronic balloting, and electronic versions of newsletters.

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

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

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

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

Subscriptions for the year ending 31 December 2012 and 2013 are £17 UK, £22 Europe and £23 outside of Europe; For information about Five-year memberships (five years for the price of four) beginning in 2012 are £68 UK and £92 outside Europe.

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

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If you are interested in details of student, five-year or life membership, please write (as above) or email the Membership Secretary, Stuart N. Clarke <Stuart.N.Clarke@btinternet.com>

Angelica Garnett
December 25, 1918-May 4, 2012
Daughter of Vanessa Bell and Niece of Virginia Woolf
Mother of Amaryllis Virginia Garnett, Henrietta Garnett, Nerissa Stephen Garnett and Frances Garnett
Painter and Author of the memoir, “Deceived with Kindness”
Honorary President of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain

S. P. (Stanford Patrick [Pat]) Rosenbaum
1929-2012
A Remembrance of Angelica Garnett

During a sabbatical stay in Sussex in the late 1970s, I was fortunate enough to be invited by Angelica Garnett to tea at Charleston —well, I was in love, of course, with the charms (at that time pretty funky as it was pre-restoration) of the art-tattooed place and disheveled garden, and also with Angelica herself—those handsome Thobgy-like features and her seeming openness to me. I thought we were fast reaching a special intimacy UNTIL the telephone rang and it was one of her daughters. Her proper rather cello voice suddenly fluted, her manner became all love and caring, her body language bloomed, everything about her changed in response to this call from one of her own. And I realized that what I had seen before was not the real Angelica but rather good manners and simple kindness to yet another American woman Woolf scholar/fan. . . . It put me in my place, but I still loved her and the early Charleston and am grateful for that experience, both parts of it.

J. J. Wilson

A Special Issue on Eco-Woolf edited by Diana Swanson

Virginia Woolf and Critical Uses of Ecofeminism

What do we mean when we say that we are taking an ecofeminist approach to Woolf? Appealing though its theories may be, ecofeminism offers numerous pitfalls, starting with the learning curve required to take in this diverse and burgeoning set of approaches. In writing about Woolf from an ecofeminist angle, part of the work is to bring along an audience that may need its own primer on the subject while still satisfying critics who have a lot more experience with one or more of the various ecofeminist approaches, or with the long history of ecocriticism.

Anachronism is one of the first problems to consider. The most we can argue for Woolf is proto-ecofeminism. “Ecology” was available as a term by 1866, in the work of German biologist Ernst Haeckel. Thus it is roughly contemporary with the largely compatible evolutionary work of Charles Darwin, and was an evolving science in the modernist era. Ecology takes its name from the Greek word for “house,” suggesting an ordered, sustaining system in a sheltered space, but also domesticity which poses its own challenge for feminist analysis, and indeed for ecological science with its increased interest in ecological chaos. Proto-ecological narratives are decipherable in both Romantic and Victorian literature, not to mention the work of ancient Greeks themselves.

The modern science of ecology evolved simultaneously with modernism, fostered at first by the natural history tradition that was part of the cultural context for Woolf and others of her generation. Christina Alt’s recent book, Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature, is justly critical of the limitations of the “taxonomic” approach favored particularly by British practitioners of natural history. Indeed Woolf lavishes satire, including self-satire, on avid collectors and classifiers. She does indeed show excitement about what is being discovered in the biological laboratory, especially when women are found conducting science, as they do in A Room of One’s Own and in her essay on the agricultural entomologist, “Eleanor Ormerod.” But ecological science also advanced mechanical models of environmental order and control that have proven equally suspect under feminist scrutiny. Conversely, natural history also has a narrative tradition that shows sensitivity to context and process, and this narrative natural history could weave its way into ecology anew through interdisciplinary ventures up to the present day.

Ecofeminism became a term only in the mid-1970s. Arguably, there were also proto-ecofeminisms reaching well back in history and legend. For example, the Chipko Movement, which came to prominence in the 1970s, preserves the memory of legendary women in India martyred while hugging trees essential to their community’s sustenance; this is one of the first examples provided in Karen Warren’s Ecofeminist Philosophy—itself a good starting place for comprehending the developing field of ecofeminist approaches. Woolf could appreciate Dorothy Wordsworth’s careful detailing of nature without undue assertion of the human self, in her Grasmere Journal. Women writers hailed as American regionalists are also well understood for their ecological values, as in Sarah Orne Jewett’s satirizing a naturalist whose methodology involves large scale shooting of birds in “The White Heron” or Mary Austin’s embracing indigenous attitudes toward nature in the American Southwest.

Ecofeminism has greatly diversified in its forty-plus year history. I used a portion of my 2010 keynote at the twentieth annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf to share some of those options. Eco-Woolfians can also be expected to have familiarity with the interdisciplinary field of ecological literary criticism, as represented for example in the journal, ISLE. Ecocriticism has its own gendered history of debates and divisions, which adds to the challenges. A reader coming from this kind of background could opine that the author cannot possibly launch into ecofeminist analysis of Woolf without first considering Laurence Buell, William Cronan, or Cary Wolfe, for example, none of whom especially identify as ecofeminists.

On a basic level, ecofeminist philosophers have critiqued the persistence of hierarchical binaries in Western thought, a primary example being that woman and nature fall on one side of the power divide, dominated by man and culture on the other, as Val Plumwood has comprehensively set forth. One way around the nature/culture binary, offered by Donna Haraway, is to recognize all of these patterns as humanistic cultural constructs. This approach acknowledges that we can only experience the natural world via “naturecultures” and sets the challenge of moving into post-humanities. Carolyn Merchant identified a shift in attitude, complicit with Enlightenment reasoning, which structures the natural world through mechanical rather than organic models and sanctifies scientific ordering and control. Woolf can readily be situated within all of these basic ecofeminist parameters, given her sensitivity to gendered power dynamics, the vast array of natural and cultural atoms that fall...
upon human consciousness, and the rhetoric of masculine scientific authority frequently satirized in her work.

Woolf appealed to some of the earliest practitioners of what has emerged as ecofeminist theory, and this can be a liability among critics seeking to be engaged in the very latest approaches. Woolf’s writing offers imagery of webs and nets that go along with the rhetoric of early ecofeminists, as in the pioneering collection, *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein. A significant number of early ecofeminists hailed the return of the goddess, whether Demeter or Gaia, as a model of maternal nurture and matriarchal society. Woolf’s friend, classical scholar Jane Ellen Harrison, whose version of pre-heroic Greek culture restored importance to goddess figures and rituals holistically grounded in nature, had great appeal to practitioners of this early phase of ecofeminism, just as Harrison had been useful to Woolf herself. As noted elsewhere, my own interest in Woolf’s moments of being for their holistic grasp of nature, as well as her representation of earth mother figures, runs the risk of being judged outmoded among more current ecofeminist occupations and it certainly does not address the more chaotic functioning of nature represented in her texts.

The last decade of ecofeminist criticism has recognized ways women writers have sought to un-domesticate traditional tropes of woman’s relation to nature (Alaimo), querying the patriarchal nature-as-home paradigm of the *oikos* as well as long-venerated maternal representations of the earth and heterosexual models for processes in nature (Gaard, Sandilands, Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson). Woolf’s deft use of irony and satire and her inclusion of non-normative familial and sexual perspectives make her a promising player in these areas as well. Woolf also explores the boundaries of humanism, or human-centeredness, respecting the perspicacity of other animals, though she is still biased in terms of finding human language as a great divide between human and all other species. Only on rare occasions does she explore the inordinate share of environmental degradation visited upon less privileged classes and races, which is a central concern of the environmental justice aspect of ecofeminism and fuels a quest for more democratic forms of environmental sustainability.

Many ecofeminist possibilities remain in Woolf’s texts. As an example and in closing, I’d like to approach a much repeated phrase in *Mrs. Dalloway* that has always been puzzling to me: Septimus Smith’s idea that an oppressive “human nature” is out to get him, which seems to serve as a deciding factor in driving him to suicide. The idea that there is such a thing as “human nature,” in the singular, requires both essentialist and normative thinking. It assumes intrinsic, unchanging, universal human characteristics and sets humans apart from other beings. In a smaller register, Woolf herself casts this idea into doubt when she suggests that “on or about December, 1910, human character changed” (“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” 96), offering as an example the shifted human relations between herself and her cook. Scientists also question the normative value of human nature. In the debate over nature versus nurture, the principal of human nature is invoked, only to be qualified. Evolutionary psychology retains an interest in the interplay of genes with environment, affecting their expression and occasioning another form of change in human nature.

Like the Georgian cook emerging from the basement kitchen in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Septimus is a marginal but transforming cultural being. He has emerged from the provinces of Stroud. His reading of science and Shakespeare and attendance at lectures by Miss Isabel Pole have given him cultural bearings. What might have been a gradual cultural evolution, however, has been interrupted by the chaos and shock of war, jarring his sense of authority and human nature or, in a troubling way, revealing the sinister side of cultural conditioning (see Kostkowska). One of the standard attributes assigned to human nature and used as a distinction of humans from all or at least many animals is the ability to feel various emotions, from pain and mourning to pleasure and love. It is his inability to feel that alters Septimus’s sense of human beings. Human nature, rather than a concept, becomes an entity with red nostrils that is out to get him or, by extension, his scribbled works of art and science. A source of threatening nostrils may be one of Septimus’ hallucinations in Regent’s Park—the horror of a dog turning human, which he converts to the scientific vision that he “could [. . .] see into the future” because his “brain [was] made sensitive by eons of evolution” (66). He attributes the behavior of hunting in packs to humans in a later assessment (87). Human nature’s primary representatives are of course his authoritarian doctors, Holmes and Bradshaw.

Interestingly, the terms “human” and “nature” are dispersed throughout the passage preceding Septimus’s suicide, leaving a pattern for us to read. Early in the scene, Septimus is empowered by the his sense of Nature entering the room: “At every moment Nature signified by some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall [. . .] brandishing her plumes, shaking her tresses, shaking her mantle this way and that, beautifully, always beautifully” (136). Nature takes on attributes that are feminine and suggest both passion and beauty—“brandishing plumes” being a staple for Woolf. When the serving girl laughs over his drawings, Septimus cries over “human cruelty” (137), as if encountering a grand oppression. Septimus is repeatedly encouraged, however, to find Rezia “perfectly natural, sewing!” (139). Even as Holmes is closing in, and Septimus pauses before jumping, we learn: “He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings—what did they want?” (146). This is nearly his last thought, entertained from what approximates a posthuman condition. In declaring “I’ll give it you!” does he contribute toward an answer to a place for human being in nature?

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**Works Cited**


“A Million Atoms”: Virginia Woolf’s Primeval Trees in The Waves

A number of critics have argued that in The Waves (1931) Virginia Woolf sought to explore the inner life of characters in relation to the outer world. Jean Guiguet, for example, construes Woolf’s subject in the novel as “the unity and multiplicity of personality” in relation to “the outside world of things” (286-7). Trees are important living things in the novel, but when mentioned by critics, the discussion of trees in The Waves is confined to arguments launched from a philosophical standpoint (Albright) or limited to the description of particular trees (Kelley). I argue that, as part of the outer world, trees as well as leaves are essential to the novel and to Woolf’s vision. Not just a component of Woolf’s “eyeless” world, trees function as objects that counter the flux of change because of their solidity and stability. Yet they also stand for flux, as when the leaves of trees are likened to vibrating atoms. Similarly, leaves stand for the countless “atoms” or impressions accumulated in consciousness. Trees even appear in the novel as internalized images representing each character’s sense of self. Finally, trees for Woolf are always primeval and living, just as she imagines the human self.

Trees appear often in the italicized passages of The Waves. Except for the second italicized passage and the last one, which consists of just one sentence, trees are mentioned in all such passages. In these italicized passages, trees with their leaves indicate the changes of the seasons and the passage of time. Trees in the outer world also appear in the characters’ self-narration. Trees frequently appear in the background of characters or as a part of the setting. For example, Rhoda sees some figures advancing toward her and feels as follows: “as they pass that tree, they regain their natural size” (178). Here trees are suggested to be a kind of measure of human life; human existence cannot be possible or narrated without the existence of trees or the external world. Near the end of the novel, Bernard imagines that his and other characters’ lives blaze against the background of a tree.

Against the gateway, against some cedar tree I saw blaze bright, Neville, Jimmy, Rhoda, Louis, Susan and myself, our life, our identity. […] But we—against the brick, against the branches, we six, out of how many million millions, for one moment out of what measureless abundance of past time and time to come, burnt there triumphant. (213-14)

In the last two examples, the characters see humans against a backdrop of trees. By these trees’ stable and secure presence as objects of the real world, the characters are also given the sense of their secure existence in the outer world. Indeed for Woolf, trees are objects that are stable and solid and as such are important to make the characters exist with secure selves.

Along with trees, leaves are frequently mentioned in the novel. For Woolf and the characters, leaves are figures as components of the self, representing the countless “atoms” or impressions accumulated in memory and consciousness. In the novel, Rhoda likens leaves to the fragmented impressions coming to her mind: “Look at life through this, look at life through that; let there be rose leaves, let there be vine leaves—I covered the whole street, Oxford Street, Piccadilly Circus, with the blaze and ripple of my mind, with vine leaves and rose leaves” (157). Similarly, Woolf compares leaves to impressions in To the Lighthouse: “He began to search among the infinite series of impressions which time had laid down, leaf upon leaf, fold upon fold softly, incessantly upon his brain” (184). Leaves indicate the vibrating atoms that compose self, suggesting what Maria DiBattista calls “the fretful motions of ‘one’ life” in “the larger temporal movements of the historical and natural order” (189). Yet leaves are not just mentioned countless times in various kinds of trees; they are described in particular states. Leaves in the tree-tops or topmost leaves of trees are referred to a number of times. The newest part of trees, these leaves suggest a new growth of self.

The trees that Woolf describes are living and changing. They are not merely objects but living natural entities. For instance, Neville looks at trees and can feel their spirit: “I see trees specked and burnt in the autumn sunlight. […] A leaf falls, from joy. Oh, I am in love with life! Look how the willow shoots its fine sprays into the air!” (60). Here he realizes that trees are living and that they shed their leaves because they are living. Rhoda also regards trees as living objects and feels the life of trees when that life is taken away: “I will look at oaks cracked asunder and red where the flowering branch has fallen” (120); “An axe has split a tree to the core; the core is warm” (123). For Rhoda, trees are living their own lives just as humans do: “And there is ripple and laughter like the dance of olive trees and their myriad-tongued grey leaves” (123). Rhoda imagines trees as living through experiences in years past. She feels that “Every tree is big with a shadow that is not the shadow of the tree behind it” (177). The shadow here implies the tree’s own past. Trees in the novel are described as living objects with their own lives and pasts.

Trees also often appear as internalized images representing each character’s sense of self. The six major characters have their own distinctive trees in their minds. These internalized trees are most of the times not mentioned as specific species. Though there are some common characteristics, they are each described with special features, reflecting each character’s life.

The most distinctive tree is Rhoda’s. Rhoda’s internalized tree is phantom and illusionary. Though she sees her life as a tree, the tree is unsubstantial. Likewise, she leads a life without a strong sense of self—“facelessly,” as she often insists (23, 31, 91, 98, 171). For instance, she describes her difficulty of living in this world figuratively as a tree: “There are hours and hours […] before I can let my tree grow, quivering in green pavilions above my head. Here I cannot let it grow” (40-41). She goes on to describe the tree and identify herself with it:

This is a papery tree. Miss Lambert blows it down. Even the sight of her vanishing down the corridor blows it to atoms. It is not solid. […] I will sit by the river’s trembling edge and look at the water-lilies, broad and bright, which lit the oak that overhung the hedge with moonlight beams of their own watery light. […] There is

1 The trees ready for winter and shed their leaves as the novel approaches the end. Yet, those trees without leaves imply renewal as Woolf writes in her essay “A Sketch of the Past” (Moments of Being 141). Also, there is a hint of renewal in Bernard’s words in the last episode. Thus, not only the ancient past but the future being of trees and humans have affinities.
some check in the flow of my being; [...] some knot in the centre resists. [...] Now my body thaws; [...] I am incandescent. (41)

Her life is incandescent and living but lacks substance. Her being has knots in the center and is like the papery tree she describes, like the oak tree she sees lit up dimly in the moonlight. She often sees the vision of “the other side of the world” in her mind. In that image, there are also trees: “...Forests and far countries on the other side of the world,” said Rhoda, “are in [this globe]; seas and jungles; the howlings of jackals and moonlight falling upon some high peak where the eagle soars” (109). In this passage, “this globe” represents her life. In her life, she sees the other world where no human lives as she has no self and no face. Her selfless state is obvious to other characters. Bernard describes the tree Rhoda sees: “The willow as she saw it grew on the verge of a grey desert where no bird sang” (194). Rhoda’s inner tree represents her selfless state.

There are important differences among the characters’ distinctive inner trees. Four characters, Susan, Neville, Jinny, and Louis, have inner trees with strong roots. Their selves are firm and never threatened with destruction. Rhoda’s tree is not described with roots, a fact which foretells her life to be. Her tree is insubstantial. Madeline Moore implies the connection between Rhoda’s “rootlessness” and her suicide (231). Since Rhoda’s inner tree has no roots, she is moved by the waves of her life. For her, the waves are what destroy her self. Rhoda pleads, “Let me pull myself out of these waters. But they heap themselves on me; they sweep me between their great shoulders; I am turned; I am tumbled” (19). As is clear in Rhoda’s case, the roots of characters’ inner trees are integral for firm selves and lives.2 Rhoda reveals her selfless state as “nothingness.” Her tree suggests that her life will be swallowed up and tumbled in waves of life. In The Waves, the characters’ internalized trees represent their selves.

Like these characters, Woolf herself seems to see these internalized trees in humans in real life. She thinks of these trees as selves in the mind. In her essay “On Being Ill” (1926), she writes, “what ancient and obdurate oaks are uprooted in us in the act of sickness” (317). Here she describes these inner trees as oaks, trees that collapse when the self is consumed by illness. Woolf believes that her own being and consciousness are descended from thousands of people in the past (Moments of Being 65, 69) Woolf writes: “Adeline Virginia Stephen [...] descended from a great many people, some famous, some obscure” (Moments of Being 65); “Virginia Stephen [...] was born many thousands of years ago” (Moments of Being 69). Woolf’s trees are similarly ancient and primeval, described in The Waves as follows: “that is the patter of some primeval fir-cone falling to rot among the ferns” (11), “A wind ruffles the topmost leaves of primeval trees” (171). The Waves is not the only novel where Woolf uses the image of primeval trees. In her first novel The Voyage Out, she uses the primeval forests of South America as a confined space for the characters. In Flush, she uses the image of a primeval forest in Flush’s dream at the beginning of Chapter VI: “for as he slept the darkness seemed to thicken round him. If he dreamt at all, he dreamt that he was sleeping in the heart of a primeval forest, shut from the light of the sun, shut from the voices of mankind” (97). And in her last novel Between the Acts, the image of primeval forests appears at the beginning (8) and at the end (129) of the novel when Mrs. Swithin reads about ancient times in her favorite book, “an Outline of History.” The trees that Woolf describes in The Waves as well as other novels are, for the most part, not young, nor cultivated by humans. Rather they are ancient and natural trees that have lived through much. Indeed, Woolf’s interest in trees is focused on their ancientness.

As is clear in the passage from “On Being Ill,” Woolf superimposes human life on the image of trees. In The Waves, Woolf suggests commonalities between humans and trees. For instance, the life of humans is likened to the growth of trees: “The being grows rings, like a tree. Like a tree, leaves fall” (217). Woolf uses internalized images of trees to depict each character, finding common characteristics between human life and the life of trees. Woolf sees both trees and human consciousness as primeval and living. For Woolf, trees are solid but changing. Woolf believes that both trees and the self consist of “a million atoms,” The million atoms can be understood as the changing, shifting elements of life and also the fundamental elements of matter. The phrase “a million atoms” appearing at the beginning of The Waves is used to describe the sky, but it can also be applied to Woolf’s notion of trees and the self. Through the internalized image of trees with roots, Woolf expresses certain characters’ ability to live firmly and stably without being washed away in the flow of life’s waves of change. Thus, trees in the inner and outer worlds convey a sense of self for each of the major characters of this novel. Finally, the trees described in both the essay and her novel are ancient. This commonality, that is, living with their own past and with a long past ingrained in their species, for Woolf connects humans and trees. Woolf writes in her posthumous essay “Anon,” “Behind the English lay ages of toil and love. That is the world beneath our consciousness; the anonymous world to which we can still return” (385). She finds ancientness common between humans’ inner feelings from the past and the outer world. Woolf depicts trees or the outer world standing alone in her novels. Yet, rather than differences or divisions, Woolf pursues the commonness between humans and trees as part of her attempt to fuse the outer world and the inner world.

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2 Bernard’s tree is not described with roots. Like Rhoda, he is engulfed metaphorically by the waves at the end of the novel.
The Politics of Nature in Woolf's The Years

Detailed descriptions of the changing seasons and natural setting in Virginia Woolf's The Years influence both the mood of the novel and readers' perceptions of the urban and domestic locales that the novel depicts. From the “uncertain spring” (Y 3) in 1880 that opens the novel, to the sun setting on the 1930s summer evening that begins the novel's concluding chapter—in which “the sky was blue still, but tinged with gold, as if a thin veil of gauze hung over it, and here and there in the gold-blue amplitude an island of cloud lay suspended” (Y 306)—nature creates the context through which readers engage with the novel's sweeping family saga. As Jane Marcus writes in “The Years as Gotterdammerung, Greek Play, and Domestic Novel,” “These passages work like overtures that introduce the motifs we will hear developed in the body of the work” (60).

Not only in the opening of each chapter, however, but also within each chapter's body, descriptions of the natural world intrude upon the plot, turning the reader's gaze from both the Pargiter family’s interpersonal dramas and the social upheavals in the historical and political world in which the Pargiters live. Descriptions of nature disrupt the domestic and urban spaces of The Years, while at the same time they forge links between episodes that are divided by time and/or location. These descriptions cause readers to look away from what they expect to hold their attention in the novel, while at the same time the thread of nature connects these disparate plot points to one another.

In this way, Woolf engages nature to problematize the private space of the home as well as the public space of the city. The Years, which has historically received marginal critical attention compared with Woolf’s more famous novels, narratively and figuratively deploys nature as a device through which Woolf critiques the gendering of space, the patriarchal underpinnings of nationalist politics, and the binary opposition of nature and culture that relegates female subjects to the margins of political discourse. Woolf self-reflexively uses nature to expose the ways in which conventional ideas about what constitutes “natural” relations between the sexes—and “natural” relations between individual subjects and the landscapes in which they move—fall short.

Readers first witness this technique in the novel’s opening chapter. The long-suffering matriarch Rose Pargiter’s illness has defined the lives of her husband and children, and her illness and her anxiously awaited death drives readers' expectations in the opening chapter. Nature, however, disrupts this narrative drive: “Rain was falling: there was a light somewhere that made the raindrops shine. One drop after another slid down the pane; they slid and they paused; one drop joined another drop and then they slid again. There was complete silence in the bedroom” (Y 46). The novel gives far more space to Delia’s perception of the weather than to the event that signals the climax of the chapter.

The scene continues: “Is this death? Delia asked herself. For a moment there seemed to be something there. A wall of water seemed to gape apart; the two walls held themselves apart. She listened. There was complete silence. Then there was a stir, a shuffle of feet in the bedroom and out came her father, stumbling” (Y 46). The rain on the windowpane penetrates the enclosed domesticity of Abercorn Terrace, and Delia’s preoccupation with it dulls the impact of her mother’s passing. Delia stands apart, detached, in the hallway outside of the sick-room, divided from her mother’s death just as the “wall of water seemed to gape apart.” She views her father’s grief and her own response “like a scene in a play,” performed, unreal (Y 47). After that brief acknowledgment, Delia observes “quite dispassionately” that the rain continues to fall (Y 47). This pivotal event, the death of the family matriarch, has not changed everything, or even anything. The rain still falls, and it silences Delia on the subject of her mother’s death.

Perhaps most significantly, however, nature intervenes to distract not only Delia but also the reader. Instead of satisfying readers with an intimate account of Rose Pargiter’s demise, the narrative turns instead to the weather, redirecting our gaze from the enclosed domestic space (culture) and toward the uncontained world beyond it (nature). This move privileges nature over culture, while at the same time it refuses to align woman with nature. In other words, the text performs an operation that destabilizes the opposition between the spaces that it represents, and thus forces readers to evaluate the assumptions that they bring to the novels that they read.

The novel further emphasizes this destabilization in the scene that immediately follows. The falling rain connects London’s Abercorn Terrace to Oxford, where Edward, unaware of his mother’s passing, translates Antigone and drinks port with his friends while cousin Kitty, her father the Oxford don, and her social-climbing mother entertain visiting Americans. The narrative refuses readers the instant gratification of watching the Pargiters mourn. Meaning is displaced from the climactic event onto the mundane details of the surviving characters’ everyday lives, crucially disrupting the opposition between nature and culture in the novel.

According to Stacy Alaimo’s introduction to Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space:

Disrupting the opposition between nature and culture opens up spaces for feminisms that neither totally affirm nor totally deny difference. Feminism can instead cobble together a myriad of adulterated alternatives that neither seek an untainted, utterly female space outside of culture nor cast off bodies, matter, and nature as that which is forever debased. (10)

Alaimo’s assertion can assist us in evaluating Woolf’s narrative choices in The Years, which serve not only aesthetic ends but also political ones. Paying attention to the novel’s insistence on displacing “significant” events, conversations, and explanations in the plot, in this case through nature, opens up new pathways for understanding The Years that go beyond genetic criticism. Most notably, doing so allows us to move beyond looking for the key to The Years in “Professions for Women” or The Pargiters.

For my purposes here, I am especially interested in the way that “Professions for Women” has shaped and potentially limited our interpretations of The Years. “Professions for Women” famously insists that, “Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (60) and further, that once that Angel is killed, the woman writer must seek to tell “the truth about [her] own experiences as a body” (62). With “Professions for Women” operating as the origin text for Woolf’s novel-essay project The Pargiters, which she then separates into the polemical Three Guineas and the novel The Years, Woolf’s two arguments have powerfully influenced criticism of The Years. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have connected Rose Pargiter’s death in the 1880 chapter to Woolf’s call for the death of the Angel in the House (50); Jane Marcus in “The Years as Gotterdammerung, Greek Play, and Domestic Novel,” Patricia Moran in “Gunpowder Plots: Sexuality and Censorship in Woolf’s Later Works,” and others have evaluated
the novel in terms of its depiction of embodiment, particularly as that embodiment or lack thereof in the twentieth century influences women’s entry into the public sphere.

This division within the criticism, inspired by Woolf’s own essay, amplifies other oppositions typically deployed not only within scholarship on Woolf but also within scholarship on modernism more generally: nature vs. civilization; home vs. world; private vs. public; psychology vs. corporeality; personal vs. political. In “A Sketch of the Past,” however, Woolf objects to such divisions. She writes: “Every day includes much more non-being than being. [...] The real novelist can somehow convey both sorts of being. [...] I have never been able to do both. I tried—in Night and Day; and in The Years” (70).

This passage conveys an aesthetic challenge that dominates Woolf’s fiction: the challenge to disrupt binary oppositions. In The Years, Woolf’s deployments of nature appear as one technique that may upset these oppositions, oppositions which underwrite both patriarchy and colonialism.

As depictions of nature continue to appear throughout the novel, readers recognize that in each instance they signal subtle critique of the detrimental effects of patriarchal and colonial institutions and social structures, structures that fail to capture or to value the indeterminacy of human experience. Readers see this quite clearly in the 1911 chapter, when Eleanor makes her annual visit to Morris and his family at his mother-in-law’s home in Dorsetshire. Also visiting is Sir William Whatney, who in their youth had praised Eleanor’s eyes. He dominates the conversation with his commentary on the Balkans and his recollections of his time in India: “his voice boomed out. He wanted an audience” (Y 201).

Eleanor observes:

He was boasting, of course; that was natural. He came back to England after ruling a district ‘about the size of Ireland,’ as they always said; and nobody had ever heard of him. She had a feeling that she would hear a great many more stories that sailed serenely to his own advantage, during the week-end. (Y 201-02)

After this observation, Eleanor’s attention veers away from Whatney to her own musings, which her niece Peggy interrupts in order to draw the women’s attention to an owl. Her interruption gives the women an out to “shut the door upon the gentlemen and their politics” and to move to the terrace (Y 202), where Eleanor is excited to have a chance to glimpse the owl:

She was becoming more and more interested in birds. It was a sign of old age, she supposed, as she went into her bedroom. An old maid who washes and watches birds, she said to herself as she looked in the glass. (Y 203)

In this scene, Woolf intersperses a preoccupation with global politics—Morris and Whatney discussing the “situation in the Balkans” (Y 201) and Whatney recounting his colonial adventures—with meditations on the nature of family and the division between the sexes in conventional domestic arrangements. When Peggy catches sight of the owl, not only does she divert the other women’s attention from the “significant” and male-dominated conversation at the table, but also she diverts readers’ attention from that conversation. In this way, it becomes apparent that the narrative invests little faith in the political solutions that characters like Morris and Whatney might offer, solutions that are the products of the political institutions that are intrinsic to both patriarchy and colonialism. Instead of imagining nature—focusing on pleasure, pain, birth, and aging.

The conclusion of the novel fluctuates between the external natural world and humanity. This movement crucially flattens the distinctions between the natural world and humanity, between nature and culture.

“AREN’T they lovely?” said Delia, holding out the flowers.

Eleanor started.

“The roses? Yes . . .” she said. But she was watching the cab. A young man had got out; he paid the driver. Then a girl in a tweed traveling suit followed him. He fitted his latch-key to the door.

“There.” Eleanor murmured, as he opened the door and they stood for a moment on the threshold. “There!” she repeated as the door shut with a little thud behind them.

Then she turned round into the room. “And now?” she said, looking at Morris, who was drinking the last drops of a glass of wine. “And now?” she asked, holding out her hands to him.

The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace. (Y 434-35)

First, while Delia attempts to draw Eleanor’s attention to the roses, Eleanor’s answer reflects her emotional response to watching the man and woman exiting the taxicab and leaving public space and entering private space. This image recalls and inverts Woolf’s famous image in A Room of One’s Own, wherein she uses the metaphor of a man and a woman getting into a taxicab to illustrate her theory of the androgynous mind of the author (AROO 95-6). Observing the man and woman gives Eleanor and the reader a certain kind of satisfaction, but it also leads to the question, “And now?” No reply comes to that question: again, nature intervenes, and only the natural setting—the sun and sky—remains.

In The Years, Woolf deploys nature to disrupt those binary oppositions that are intrinsic to both patriarchy and colonialism. Instead of imagining nature “as the outside of culture,” Woolf admits “the possibility that nature could intervene or affect cultural systems” (Alaimo 12). In her use of nature throughout the novel, Woolf emphasizes the necessity of meditating on the experiences and spaces of everyday life, an emphasis that constitutes an explicit challenge to theories of the novel that emphasize plot and the phallic drive toward satisfaction, meaning, truth, or a “happy ending.” Further, Woolf does not in The Years...

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1 Alaimo focuses primarily on the gendering of the American landscape and nature in the context of American literary texts.
2 For discussion of such theories of the novel, see Brooks.
present a manifesto on patriarchy, nationalism, or colonialism, and she frustrates desire that readers might have for one, while at the same time her narrative practice embodies an explicit challenge to the practices of patriarchy, nationalism, or colonialism. As Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble*,

> If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old. (149)

These are the stakes of Woolf’s experiment in *The Years*, and they are bound to Woolf’s anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial interests. By turning to meditations on nature—weather, birds, insects, humanity—Woolf resists the impulse toward didacticism and fixed positions, and she embraces a feminist narrative practice of contingency and disruption.

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The Exterminatory Pacifism of *Three Guineas*

In 1939, anticipating the outbreak of war, Charles Elton, the biologist recognized as having established the study of animal ecology in Britain in the 1920s and 30s, offered his services and those of the newly formed Bureau of Animal Population to the war effort. Elton proposed that the Bureau dedicate itself to the study of effective methods of rodent control as a way of aiding in the protection of Britain’s food supply and the prevention of diseases spread by rodent-borne parasites (Crowcroft 28). Pest control was one of the perennial challenges of wartime, both at home and in the front lines. Military food caches, unharvested crops, damaged and deserted buildings, and the untended remains of the human and animal dead supported the proliferation of pest species. The literature of the First World War vividly describes the rat-filled trenches of the front lines, and rats were among the most lingering of Orwell’s memories of the Spanish Civil War. In a war fought in part through blockades and rationing, the protection of food stores through the extermination of pest species made a significant contribution to the war effort and Elton’s work can be viewed as a necessary response to the exigencies of wartime. However, Elton’s work was also consistent with the wider aims of early ecology; in the early stages of its emergence as a discipline, ecology was represented by its practitioners as a socially responsible science that would improve human life by allowing humanity to assume greater control over the natural world (Anker 80).

Elton’s view of pest extermination as a socially responsible science has a perhaps unexpected parallel in *Three Guineas*, where Woolf uses extermination as a metaphor for resistance and reform, advancing an argument for peace and equality in part through the analogy of crushing “the creature, Dictator[,]” infesting the heart of England (175). Woolf’s use of this exterminatory metaphor reflects a tension between her pacifist argument and her combative tone in *Three Guineas*; both the contradictions that this tension generates and the ways in which Woolf seeks to resolve these contradictions offer insight into Woolf’s argument and literary method.

In the opening chapter of *Three Guineas*—a chapter formulated as a response to the question, “How in your opinion are we to prevent war?”—Woolf places violence against nature and violence between human beings on a continuum with each other (117). While advancing the argument that “to fight has always been the man’s habit, not the woman’s[,]” she draws a parallel between men’s history of waging war and their appetite for recreational violence (TG 120). She cites the extravagant violence of blood sports, noting, “[t]he number of animals killed in England for sport during the past century must be beyond computation. 1,212 head of game is given as the average for a day’s shooting at Chatsworth in 1909” (TG 274-75 n3). She then links this violence against nature with violence against human beings through the implicit logic connecting the observations that “[s]carcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman’s rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts have been killed by you, not by us” (TG 120-21). However, having presented this argument regarding the continuity between violence against nature and the violence of war in the first chapter of *Three Guineas*, Woolf proceeds in the second chapter to advance an argument for peace, liberty, and equality through an analogy of extermination.

Asserting the injustice of the dictator’s assumption that “he has the right whether given by God, Nature, sex or race is immaterial, to dictate to other human beings how they shall live; what they shall do,” Woolf puts forward a convincing argument for resistance to authoritarianism (TG 175). To bolster this argument, she employs a dehumanizing metaphor to describe “the creature, Dictator”: she demands, “are we not all agreed that the dictator when we meet him abroad is a very dangerous as well as a very ugly animal? And here he is among us, raising his ugly head; spitting his poison, small still, curled up like a caterpillar on a leaf, but in the heart of England” (TG 175). To return to the language of blood sport, this dehumanizing tactic makes the dictator fair game. Woolf presents women as already engaged in “fight[ing] that insect” and recommends that men help women to “crush him in our own country” before asking women to help them “crush him abroad” (TG 176).

Woolf’s use of this exterminatory metaphor resonates strangely with her earlier comparison of the violence of war with violence against nature and her accompanying protestation that “we [women] cannot understand the impulses, the motives, or the morality which lead you [men] to go to war” (TG 124-25). Woolf returns in Chapter 3 to the argument that “fighting […] is a sex characteristic which [women] cannot share”
Woolf’s description of “the public world, the professional system, with himself. However, by the end of the second chapter of By contrast, the slippage of Woolf’s metaphor gradually complicates its extermination and literal extermination is closed very quickly in the film. Yet even this does not resolve the internal contradictions of her argument, for she is quick to criticize metaphorical violence for its role in producing the conditions and attitudes that foster war. She criticizes the competitiveness and combativeness fostered by institutionalized education and the professions, arguing that “all the other professions [. . .] seem to be as bloodthirsty as the profession of arms itself,” even if the “combatants” in these other professions do “not inflict flesh wounds” (TG 176). Consequently, she expresses concern that, having gained admittance to these formerly male domains, educated professional women will soon become as competitive, possessive, and pugnacious as educated professional men. Metaphorical violence, Woolf suggests, is not without its dangers.

The potential danger of Woolf’s own exterminatory argument for peace is illustrated by the fact that the very dictators that Woolf writes against in Three Guineas also employed exterminatory metaphors to dehumanize those they wished to destroy. Anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda, for example, sought to dehumanize the Jewish people by likening them to a pest species. In the film The Eternal Jew (Der Ewige Jude), made for the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda in 1940, images of swarming rats are shown as the commentary of the pseudo-documentary declares, “Wherever rats appear they bring ruin, by destroying mankind’s goods and foodstuffs. [. . .] In this way, they (the rats) spread disease, plague, leprosy, typhoid fever, cholera, dysentery, and so on. [. . .] Among the animals, they represent the rudiment of an insidious and underground destruction—just like the Jews among human beings” (“Still Images”).

It seems important to acknowledge that in her argument for resistance to fascist and patriarchal control, Woolf employs a metaphor similar in its initial formulation to that employed by the Nazis to endorse genocide. The dehumanization of one’s enemies and the promotion of their extermination constitute extreme and aggressive tactics that appear dramatically at odds with Woolf’s earlier assertions of pacifism and non-violence.

However, despite their initial similarities, neither Woolf’s metaphor nor that of the Nazi propaganda film is static or stationary, and there are crucial differences in the ways the metaphors in these two works shift and develop. The Nazi propaganda film deliberately collapses the distance between the tenor and vehicle of its pest metaphor. A clip of Hitler at the end of the film calling for the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe makes clear that what is suggested here is a literal equation of the Jewish people with a pest species judged deserving of extermination (“Still Images”). The gap between metaphorical extermination and literal extermination is closed very quickly in the film. By contrast, the slippage of Woolf’s metaphor gradually complicates its original dehumanizing analogy. When first introduced in Three Guineas, the metaphor of the caterpillar is applied to the figure of the dictator himself. However, by the end of the second chapter of Three Guineas, the caterpillar has already become a more broadly allusive image through Woolf’s description of “the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed” which “forces us to circle, like caterpillars head to tail, round and round the mulberry tree, the sacred tree, of property” (TG 199). Already Woolf is suggesting that the qualities of the caterpillar are latent within us all and that women entering the professions must resist the temptation to succumb to their caterpillar nature. The diffusion of the caterpillar metaphor alters its import, transforming it from an analogy that dehumanizes an adversary to one that acknowledges a universal human susceptibility.

Woolf’s metaphor continues to shift and change as her argument unfolds. By the beginning of the third chapter, she has begun to argue that, “if we knew the truth of war, the glory of war would be scotched and crushed where it lies curled up in the rotten cabbage leaves of our prostituted fact-purveyors” (TG 222). The caterpillar here becomes a metaphor for a dangerous and destructive attitude or ideology—the glorification of war—that has infested society and contaminated people’s worldview. While Woolf first used the caterpillar metaphor to argue for the obliteration of actual persons or types, in her subsequent use of the metaphor she turns to recommending the eradication of pernicious attitudes and beliefs.

Nor is it only the tenor of Woolf’s metaphor that changes. The vehicle of her metaphor also shifts from a caterpillar spitting poison and laying eggs to “an egg [. . .]; a germ” and from there to a “disease,” “rampant” and “virulent” (TG 255, 263, 267). This shift to the metaphor of a germ or virus makes the dictatorial outlook that promotes violence and oppression seem less like an intrinsic feature of the male consciousness and more like a treatable illness. For while she finds the disease to be “rampant” amongst Victorian fathers, with “familiar symptoms” cropping up again and again in biographies of the period, she also identifies Victorian fathers who appear “completely immune from the disease[,]” suggesting the possibility of building up a resistance against the infection (TG 263, 264). Likewise, while some have read Woolf’s assertion that “[s]cience, it would seem, is not sexless; she is a man, a father, and infected too” as suggesting an inherently male bias in science, the language of infection again suggests a condition that is potentially curable (TG 267).

It could be argued that the gradual mutation of the vehicle of Woolf’s metaphor from an insect pest to an egg to a germ is only a shift of relation and scale, that a war against a germ merely moves the battleground inward and to a microbial level. What she calls for is still the eradication of a foreign body. However, even though it does not wholly undo the analogy of extermination, the internalization of the fight that this mutating metaphor brings about is significant. Rather than presenting the patriarchal father as a pest species to be exterminated, she presents misogyny and prejudice as diseases to be treated.

At the end of Three Guineas, Woolf again places before her reader the figure of the ‘Tyrant or Dictator’ but states, “we have not laid that picture before you in order to incite once more the sterile emotion of hate” (270). Instead, she argues that “we cannot dissociate ourselves from that figure but are ourselves that figure” and “by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure” (TG 271). This act of identification with the figure of the dictator undoes the dehumanizing and distancing achieved through her earlier presentation of the dictator as a distinct species or type. Instead of envisioning one faction of society, deemed pure, fighting another faction, deemed pestilent (an opposition that could only replicate under new terms a tyrannical order), Woolf now suggests that the struggle against tyranny is internal to everyone, and that it is the attitudes that breed discrimination that must be eradicated.

Woolf’s use of extermination as an analogy for resistance to oppressive forces reflects the early twentieth-century view of pest control as a socially responsible science that would improve and safeguard human life. Yet, through the writing of Three Guineas, Woolf also illustrates the danger of dehumanizing one’s adversaries. Through the slippage and mutation of her metaphors, Woolf transforms her initial analogy of the extermination of pest species into one of the treatment of infected
individuals, thus bringing her seemingly contradictory arguments against violence and in favor of extermination into equilibrium through the metaphor of combating diseased thinking and intolerant attitudes.

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**Writing the Land: *Between the Acts* as Ecocritical Text**

At the beginning of *Between the Acts*, Virginia Woolf describes the English countryside as a land to be read, one layered by the human activities of history: “From an aeroplane [. . . ] you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars” (4). In this passage, Woolf makes clear that the land operates as a kind of wax tablet, continuously inscribed, scraped and reused, although always and still exposing the “scars” of each layer of writing. Melba Cuddy-Keane comments on this passage that, “Woolf associated the Roman road, because of its precise straightness, with sequential logic and administrative efficiencies” (152). Yet, Woolf does not begin or end the history of the land in *Between the Acts* with the straight, sequential Roman influence. Instead, this early passage reveals Woolf’s concern here with the multiple and concurrent effects of history on the land and its people. In fact, Gillian Beer describes *Between the Acts* as “a spatial landscape, not a linear sequence” (20). The land, then, shows not a linear progression from point A to point B but a spatial field of both A and B. *Between the Acts,* then, concerns, as Lawrence Buell discusses, the all of a place because “imagining a place with any fullness requires at least a glimpse of its whole history [. . . ] back through its many generations of inhabitation to its prehuman geologic past” (74). This paper therefore discusses how the depictions of land and characters in *Between the Acts* form a palimpsest of geographical writing that asks us to understand *Between the Acts* as an ecocritical text in terms of the relationships between the land and history; between the land and the female characters, specifically Isa; and, eventually, between the land and cultural identity.

**Land and history**

First, the textual layers in *Between the Acts* demonstrate the ways in which Woolf reveals the strata of the land’s history, multiply inscribing the land and creating it, too, as a textual record and reminder of history. Specifically, in the early passage above, Woolf demarcates the effects of human history, the parasitic inhabitation of the land and the conquest of its people, through the permanent markings on the land, which are seen, now, via the modern technology of the airplane. The land, then, becomes a historical parchment of sorts on which human history inescapably writes itself.

Later, as Woolf writes of the layers of the lily pond, she includes recent, human history within extended natural developments:

There had always been lilies there, self-sown from wind-dropped seed, floating red and white on the green plates of their leaves. Water, for hundreds of years, had silted down into the hollow, and lay there four or five feet deep over a black cushion of mud. Under the thick plate of green water, glazed in its self-centered world, fish swim—gold, splashed with white, streaked with black or silver. Silently they maneuvered in their water world, poised in the blue patch made by the sky, or shot silently to the edge where the grass, trembling, made a fringe of nodding shadow. On the water-pavement spiders printed their delicate feet. A grain fell and spiraled down; a petal fell, filled and sank. At that the fleet of boat-shaped bodies paused; poised; equipped; mailed; then with a waver of undulation off they flashed.

It was in that deep centre, in that black heart, that the lady had drowned herself. (43-44)

This depiction of the lily pond at first appears to exist outside of or at least in spite of human history—for “hundreds of years” it has built up, melted down, produced, evolved. But, the last sentence includes, finally, a piece of tragic human history in the vegetative layers. Following the images of the passage, human action, here the tragedy of the lady drowning herself, does not merely rest on top of the vegetative layers but affects it entirely, to its “deep centre.” Human action, again, is shown to be implicated in and consequential to the whole of the ecosystem.

Woolf’s layering of the land with biological, including human, history shows, as Brian Osborne states, how “the context of the lived-in landscape is the history and culture of those who fabricated it and live in it. It is their habitat. It is the landscape with people in it” (230). Osborne here indicates the symbiotic relationship between the land and the people, that one cannot be considered without the other. So that, as Buell suggests, “place is ‘space to which meaning has been ascribed’” (Buell 63), that “place-sense is a kind of palimpsest of serial place-experiences” (Buell 73). What we see in *Between the Acts,* then, is Woolf’s depiction of this relationship between the land and “the people in it” through palimpsestic imagery and symbiotic relationships between the land and the characters. In order to further explore the development of “place-sense” in *Between the Acts,* it is important, as Buell further suggests, to consider whether or not the novel can be considered as an ecocritical text in which “the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (quoted in Garrard 53) and also that there is “some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given” (quoted in Garrard 53). I suggest that *Between the Acts* can be seen as an ecocritical text as it asserts both natural and human history as layered together in a kind of compost of the text.

**Land and characters**

To further demonstrate how the layering in *Between the Acts* implicates both the land and the characters, I want to consider the ways in which the land becomes connected to the characters of the novel. The strata of images in the text produces a kind of geographical subject that speaks directly to the subjectivity of Woolf’s characters, in particular Isa. In the following passage, Isa is seen as embedded within layers of geographical and domestic images as she dresses in her bedroom:

She lifted [the brush] and stood in front of the three-folded mirror, so that she could see three separate versions of her rather
heavy, yet handsome, face; and also, outside the glass, a slip of terrace, lawn and tree tops.

Inside the glass, in her eyes, she saw what she had felt overnight for the ravaged, the silent, the romantic gentleman farmer. [. . .] But outside, on the washstand, on the dressing-table, among the silver boxes and tooth-brushes was the other love; love for her husband, the stockbroker [. . .] Inner love was in the eyes; outer love on the dressing-table. But what feeling was it that stirred in her now when above the looking-glass, out of doors, she saw coming across the lawn the perambulator[?] [. . .]

She tapped on the window with her embossed hairbrush. They were too far off to hear. The drone of the trees was in their ears; the chirp of birds; other incidents of garden life, inaudible, invisible to her in the bedroom, absorbed them. Isolated on a green island, hedged about with snowdrops, laid with a counterpane of puckered silk, the innocent island floated under her window. (13-14)

In this scene, Isa’s emotional layering becomes itself a kind of island that parallels the island of the landscape in front of her, and, as I will later discuss, of England and its cultural identity. The images of Isa’s body are multiplied via the three-fold mirror. These multiple images are added to the emotional strata of the Isa inside the glass and outside the glass, separating her physical and emotional realities. Isa is then shown to be enclosed inside the house, which cannot communicate with or have access to the outside “green island.” Alex Zwerdling further suggests that “the world [Between the Acts] examines has been further broken down into something like an archipelago, with each character marooned on a different island” (323). This island, for Isa, not only isolates her from the other characters, it isolates her from the land as well, breaking down the relationship between the character and the land.

Much like Isa’s inability to access language to completion—“abortive’ was the word that expressed her” (15)—the imagery of Isa here demonstrates Isa’s position as cut off from the land and, therefore, from any identity it may allow her. Later, in discussing their proximity to the sea, she states that “‘It seems from the terrace as if the land went on for ever and ever’” (29). Unlike Isa’s attempts at language, which are truncated, the land goes on forever. Again, here, Isa does not seem to have access to that land except as an image or as landscape: she is stuck on the terrace. The connection between land and characters appears broken, but via Woolf’s imagery, they are still intricately connected as Woolf continues the mulching of human and nature imagery despite Isa’s inability to participate directly in the nature she sees.

*Land and cultural identity*

Isa and land work reflexively in the novel to insinuate the physical, lived in land and the visual, abstract landscape as co-participants if not co-dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks. Brian Osborne in his discussion on national identity refers to Ferdinand Tonnies’ “classic formulation of the transition of communities” from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*. These distinctions prove useful in our understandings of what Woolf is doing here with Isa and with the images of the land in *Between the Acts* and its revelations about English culture and its relationship with the land.

Tonnies, according to Osborne, describes *gemeinschaft*, often translated as “community,” as:

essentially local and immediate. As such, the lived-in landscape becomes a fundamental concept central to a people’s sense of community, heritage and nationhood. It is the setting for the day-to-day economic, social and ideological activities that serve to unite a distinctive people. All these culturally significant actions serve to imbue that place with evocative associations and transform it into a symbolically charged repository of past practices and events.

[. . .] Such a landscape supports the culture as its ‘hearth’ of origin, its home for the present, and its refuge for the future. The idea of this common residence in a particular place is often the matrix binding the nation together. (230)

He describes *gesellschaft*, or “society,” as that which requires that people identify with an abstraction—the territory of an artificially constituted unit, the state. Long-standing localisms are replaced by new centralizing structures of government, communications and bureaucracy that facilitate the functional interaction of the state. [. . .] Through these symbolic contributions, states are able to establish identities and thus create collective memories or ‘imagined communities.’ (230-31)

I use Tonnies’s ideas here to consider the ways in which Isa is disconnected from history and cultural identity in her isolation from the land. For Isa, “the lived-in landscape” is always outside the window or terrace from the domestic life she lives. In addition, when Woolf writes that Isa “loathed the domestic, the possessive; the maternal” (19), she signals perhaps, too, that Isa loathes this kind of separation of her own body and life from the land and culture. On this day celebrating the village’s heritage of *gemeinschaft*, Woolf shows the breakdown of the relationship between people and the land and suggests greater consequences for this village (and the greater island community) on the brink of war.

After the pageant, as Miss La Trobe begins to imagine the next play, Woolf removes the cultural signifiers from the landscape as the land is described as: “growing dark. Since there were no clouds to trouble the sky, the blue was bluer, the green greener. There was no longer a view—no Folly, no spire of Bolney Minster. It was land merely, no land in particular” (210), a land without people (or their production and destruction) in it. Perhaps, then, Woolf proposes that the land must be emptied of its cultural significance and demarcations in order to make way for a new story to be written which will reconnect the people with the land in a symbiotic relationship.

In the end, Woolf leaves us with Isa and Giles staged in a prehistoric land, one which we know does not really exist but, for the purposes of the novel, may have very real consequences such as the creation of another child:

Left alone together for the first time that day, they were silent. Alone, enmity was bare; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night.

Isa let her sewing drop. The great hooded chairs had become enormous. And Giles too. And Isa too against the window. The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks.

Then the curtain rose. They spoke. (219)

This imaginary tableau and landscape may give Isa and Giles a common image of themselves, a *gesellschaft*, or a symbolic or artificially constructed idea of society, but it does not replace the geographical world in which Isa lives or change her inability to access the *gemeinschaft*, or community, of the land and its culture. In fact, it may further trap her in the domesticity which removes her into an island apart from nature.

If, then, we consider *Between the Acts* as an ecocritical text, it is one which points to the dangers of island living and of the symbolic or artificially constructed ideas of society, land and landscape. Through the imagery of the text, Woolf portrays both the deep, unavoidable interconnectedness of the people and the land, and, through the character of Isa, she portrays the loss of this connection to the land. Writing from a
nation at war, this novel then suggests the possible loss not only of land, but of culture, not only of place but of individual and national identity.

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Virginia Woolf’s depiction of humans and nature contradicts contemporary phenomenological philosophies that espouse a positive unity of being. She establishes an inverse unity, one predicated on the cyclical repetition of violence: individual subjects enact violence against nature, just as both society and nature enact, or are perceived to enact, violence against the subject. Her theory of violence in a warring society explains how war-ready individuals must be created through rituals of violence that form the subject in the image of society. For Woolf, non-human nature is the material reality through which humans often first perceive violence and first enact it.

Woolf’s depiction of nature is neither simplistic nor consistent. Louise Westling claims that Woolf’s texts exude an environmental ethic and a rhetoric of “ecological humanism” (872).1 Madeline Moore argues that Woolf depicts the “powerlessness of human life before the final authority of nature” (227). Moore points to places in The Waves and Woolf’s personal writing that seem to suggest the otherness and emptiness of nature? By setting a match to a fire frost is defied; Nature’s decree of death is postponed” (Three Guineas 166). In other words, the material reality of non-human nature may just as well be the staging ground for the affirmation of life as for violence against it.

For Woolf, the propagation of a warring, patriarchal society requires that male subject formation occur in relation to a violent material existence. In reproducing the conditions of its own production, ideology (in the form of education, family, and even art) must depict nature violently. In Woolf’s work, young boys repeatedly encounter death or decay in nature and then later become the agents of death or violence themselves. Birds, crabs, and butterflies become their prey. If her consistent depiction of these actions qualifies them as “material rituals” then nature is the material reality—the staging ground—for violent subject formation. Violence may be encountered in and acted upon nature, but so too is it encountered in and enacted on behalf of the ideological state apparatuses (ISA) for which violence is a ritual prescribed to form the acting subject in its image. For Woolf, the rituals of violence a male child enacts upon nature demonstrate his emmeshment in ideologies that act, similarly, upon him, with the purpose of preparing him for war.

Three Guineas, Woolf’s 1938 polemic on war, women, and the future of education, investigates this notion of war as calling. She quotes a young man about to be deployed: “I have had the happiest possible life, and have always been working for war;” and his biographer adds, “From the first hour he had been supremely happy, for he had found his true calling” (10). She quotes from the biography of an airman: “The difficulty to which he could find no answer was that if permanent peace were ever achieved, and armies and navies ceased to exist, there would be no outlet for the manly qualities which fighting developed, and that human physique and human character would deteriorate” (10). Woolf concludes that the “overpowering unanimity” is in favor of “war as a profession; a source of happiness and excitement; and also [. . .] an outlet for manly qualities” (10-11). Where do these “manly qualities” develop? How has the soldier been “always working for war”? And where do the

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1 See also Waller, Kostkowska, and Scott for other scholarship on Woolf and nature.
mass of men in a warring society arrive at the notion that it is “better to kill than to be killed” (11)?

Woolf’s theory of violent subject formation through the natural and the national gives an answer. She depicts this process in *Jacob’s Room* while tracing the development of a man from child to soldier by chronicling his formation in and by the ideologies and apparatuses acting upon him.2 In the novel’s opening beach scene, Jacob is engrossed in an effort to capture a “huge crab” (9). Climbing the large rocks protruding from the sand “like something primitive,” the narrator says, is enough to make a boy like Jacob “feel rather heroic” (9). The narrator’s depiction commingles childhood beach play with the militaristic language of conquest, implying that through language, ideology is always already forming the subject in a material reality.

Jacob seeks a strange comfort in that material reality when he realizes he is not with his family, and in the midst of his tears and confusion he reaches, with no explanation, for the skull of a dead cow or sheep. It stands as a *memento mori*, a reminder that the material reality in which Jacob enacts the rituals of conquest is marked by inevitable death. Even after reuniting with his family, Jacob remains attached to the sheep’s jaw, to the point of sleeping with it at the foot of his bed. Similarly, in *To the Lighthouse*, James Ramsey insists that a pig skull remain hanging in his nursery despite Cam and Mrs. Ramsey’s protests. In both cases, the skulls portend future violence. For sheep and pigs, as for soldiers, the violence would come from human hands and fulfill human desires. In a sense, then, both a sheep and a soldier are being formed for the same ends. Thus, Jacob, like the crab, who spends the night futilely circling the bottom of a bucket, will die by forces beyond his control.

Both Mrs. Ramsey’s and Betty Flanders’s initial maternal resistance to death attachment eventually gives way to complicity with violence by way of consent, and at other times they wholly support it in the name of education. For example, Jacob collects butterflies that he “vanquished” with camphor before mounting them in boxes with their titles, but here death is intellectually edifying and therefore welcomed into the house (23). Similarly, the Ramsey boys of *To the Lighthouse* engage in an education by violence when they kill birds or capture crabs. Mrs. Ramsey laments her son Jasper’s attempts to shoot the rooks she has anthropomorphized, but tacitly approves of Andrew’s violence in the name of childhood curiosity: “Crabs, she had to allow, if Andrew really wished to dissect them” (30). Allowing their boys to be agents of death in nature is, for the mothers, acceptable when it is sanctioned by science, but as adults, the boys themselves become the expendable specimens. Both Jacob and Andrew lose their lives in war on behalf of the state.

In *Orlando*, Woolf demonstrates that the deaths of humans at the hand of nature fascinate the state just as much as the deaths of animals amuse Jacob, Andrew, James, and Jasper. In one scene, the English landscape is frozen in the grip of “The Great Frost” whose “icy blast” turns otherwise mellowed trees into “carved in the wood” (176). The detail recalls the portentous sheep’s jaw in the novel’s opening scene and implies that, even from the beginning, Jacob was always being formed in the image of society, and, by illusive/allusive extension, nature. Yet, even if he had not been called to war, Jacob’s last purchase, a hunting-crop, reveals that he would have continued to use nature, the scene of his early encounters with death, as his material outlet for violence. Similarly, in *Three Guineas*, Woolf argues for a direct relationship between hunting animals and preparing for war. She is quick to point out, though, that the history of hunting is a gendered one:

> The number of animals killed in England for sport during the past century must be beyond computation. 1,212 head of game is given as the average for a day’s shooting at Chatsworth in 1909. (*Men, Women, and Things*, by the Duke of Portland, p. 251) Little mention is made in sporting memoirs of women guns; and their appearance in the hunting field was the cause of much caustic comment. (173)

Just as Woolf offers Wilfred Owen as an exception to her rule that men feel called to fight, she also offers the nineteenth century horsewoman, “Skittles,” as proof that not all women are averse to sport hunting (173). Woolf is not necessarily arguing that more women be included in formative rituals of violence in nature, but, rather, illuminating that they are, in fact, rituals whose “masculine” integrity is preserved by the exclusion of women. While developing an affinity for violence in men is tantamount to the reproduction of the conditions of destruction, women are key to the reproduction of the conditions of production—namely, producing more violent men.

Woolf’s “call” at the conclusion of *Three Guineas* is issued to both the individual voices and common feelings of men and women. She suggests that another figure—the figure of a man in uniform—imposes itself on the foreground of an image of burned homes and mutilated bodies, but both she and her male correspondent, the secretary of the pacifist society, can respond to this image with equal horror and disgust. The horror comes not from a sense of alienation but of connection: “we cannot dissociate ourselves from that figure but are ourselves that figure. It suggests that we are not passive spectators doomed to unresisting obedience but by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure” (168). Woolf’s call is both indicting and liberating because it recognizes a universal complicity with the cycle of violence while it simultaneously identifies the freedom to (re)act differently, to work toward a unity of being on the inverse side of the unity of violence. “A common interest unites us” Woolf adds, “it is one world, one life. How essential it is that we should realise that unity the dead bodies, the ruined houses prove” (168-69).

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Woolf on the Downs

The South Downs is a high escarpment trailing down to a range of softly rolling chalk hills bordering the southeastern coast of England like a rippling green kirtle with an underskirt of white lace, revealed most spectacularly in the white cliffs near Eastbourne. From December 1910 when she rented a villa in Firle until her death in the river Ouse in March 1941, Virginia Woolf maintained a country residence there. While the downs per se do not provide the explicit setting for any of Woolf’s novels, elements of their appeal are part of the complex composites that form her literary geographies. Stuart N. Clarke has recently noted the similarities between St. Ives and Scarborough in *Jacob’s Room*; the moors behind Dods Hill also bear a certain resemblance to the South Downs, especially the “saucer-shaped hollow” where Mrs. Jarvis goes to read poetry (IR 14, 15, 25). The red hot pots which frame the view of the bay at Talland House and in *To the Lighthouse* (TTL 23) also framed the views of the downs across the water meadows at Monk’s House; the swans which ride the streams near Susan’s farm in *The Waves* still swim the channels between Rodmell and the river Ouse (W 72); and the

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1 See photos of Leonard and Virginia in 1931 posed against pokers in Humm 128. The photos can also be seen on the Harvard Theater Library website: http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/eisreundtourism/localandfamilyhistory/localhistory/authors/woolf.htm.

2 Gillian Beer’s British 1991 annotated Penguin edition of *Between the Acts* has a cover that clearly identifies the novel’s setting as being on the downs (for photograph of cover, see East Sussex County Council website: http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/eisreundtourism/localandfamilyhistory/localhistory/authors/woolf.htm). The novel itself is typically ambiguous about its exact location. In some respects Pointz Hall is like Asheham (“this whitish house with the grey roof, and the wing thrown out at right angles, lying unfortunately low on the meadow, with a fringe of trees on the bank above it” (BTA 5), but it is Monk’s house not Asheham which faces north (BTA 6). Although the house is said to be “in a remote village in the very heart of England” which takes three hours to reach by train (BTA 12), the phone number that Isa Oliver calls to order fish is in Pyecomb (BTA 11), a village in Sussex west of Lewes and north of Brighton, on the South Downs Way. Bolney, the spire of whose church is visible from Pointz Hall, according to Figg’s Guidebook (BTA36) is another village in West Sussex a little further north.

3 Rudyard Kipling’s “Sussex” (1902) barely predates Woolf’s 1903 praise of the downs, and is a possible source for her metaphors: “No tender hearted garden crowns, / No bosomed woods adorn, / Our blunt, bow-headed whale-backed Downs, / But gnarled and withiten thorn” (17-20).
quickly; smooth & sloping like the waves” (D3 231). A late diary entry of December 1940 returns to this aquatic theme, the “downs breaking their wave” being part of the “incredible loveliness” of the country (D5 346).

In 1912, Virginia leased Asheham, located along the same line of downs as Firle with a long prospect over the Ouse River and the western downs (BA 56). Asheham became more than just a weekend cottage for Virginia; it became the site of her early courtship and marriage and a haven for rest and recuperation after her September 1913 breakdown and suicide attempt. Woolf’s descriptions of the downs around Asheham evoke a sense of protective comfort, the hills sometimes being presented as furniture in a nature-sized house. In 1918 and 1919 respectively, she speaks of “the look of all those old beautiful very worn carpets which are spread over the lower slopes of the hills” (DI 185) and of “a blissful roll among elastic clouds & cushiony downs” (DI 309).

Forced to leave Asheham in 1919 by the landlord’s plans to install a new bailiff, Leonard and Virginia searched for a place as nearby as possible. Monk’s House, in the village of Rodmell, across the river from Asheham, boasted sweeping views of Mount Caburn and the downs as seen over flat water meadows. During her many years at Monk’s House, Woolf’s comments about the surrounding countryside clustered around two interestingly oppositional imaginative sites: safe harbors and wide prospects. Despite her doubts as to whether nature could be called “beneficent” (L6 352), the downs offered Woolf the comfort of protected hollows. In 1932, she recorded a walk near Caburn: “among those primeval downs, like a Heal bed, L. said, so comfortable: bowl shaped shadows; half circles; curves; a deep valley” (D4 74). And in 1939, she again reported finding refuge on her walks, telling Ethel Smythe in August: “And now and then I walk off, miles away, into the downs, find a deserted farm wall, and lie among the thistles and the straw” (L6 352). In December, she wrote Vita: “I’ve been battling against the wind to the top of the downs, where there’s a hollow—a wind warm hollow, as the poet, but which?—says” (L6 373).2

At the same time, views of the long stretch of the downs were particularly important to Woolf, sometimes seen from the safe harbor of the garden at Monk’s House. Within a year of their tenancy, the laurel hedge was cut down to clear the view of the downs (D2 195) and Leonard and Virginia bought the adjoining terrace in 1928, at least partially so that they could have “a garden all round” Woolf’s writing lodge and so her view would not be impeded by the herds of sheep which had previously surrounded her (D3 108). When suburban development began to spread out towards Rodmell in the early 1930s, Woolf’s rage was most frequently aroused by the way that new buildings spoiled her view.8

Closely associated with her pleasure in viewing the wide expanse of the downs was Woolf’s delight in watching the shifting effects of light and color moving across their curves. She frequently undercut the sense of power and domination usually inherent in a position of prospect by emphasizing the transience of the effects she observed and by including peeks into hollows. In an August 1918 letter to Dora Carrington, Woolf made the downs into a post-impressionist canvas: “Imagine the corn all turning different shades of yellow over the downs; and then theres a green patch, and a red one, and so on” (L2 267). A few days later, she attempted to “convey the look of clouded emerald which the downs wear, the semi-transparent look, as the sun & shadows change, & the green becomes now vivid now opaque” (D1 185). In August 1927, she again commented on “that fading & rising of the light which so enraptures me in the downs: which I am always comparing to the light beneath an alabaster bowl” (D3 192). In August of 1931, she recounted the scene after a thunderstorm: “various, tender, fleeting, evanescent, I stood by the gate & watched Asheham hill cloud & kindle like the emerald it is” (D4 39). Even as the downlands were being strung with barbed wire in preparation for a possible invasion, she could lose herself in their beauty: “Yet how the grass shone pale emerald green when I walked off my temper [over losing a game of bowls] on the marsh after dinner. The passages of colour, over Asheham, like the green backgrounds in Vermeer” (D3 301). One of her last diary entries, written the day before Christmas 1940, summarizes these views: “The downs breaking their wave, yet one pale quarry; & all the barns & stacks either a broken pink, or a verdurous green; & then the walk by the wall; & the church; & the great tithe barn. How England consoles & warms one, in these deep hollows, where the past stands almost stagnant” (D5 346).9

Of course Woolf’s observations of the downs also came from walking on them, often for several hours a day.10 In 1926, she stated: “I am extremely happy walking on the downs. […] I like to have space to spread my mind out in[,] […] to breathe in more light & air; to see more grey hollows & gold cornfields & the first ploughed land shining white, with the gulls flickering” (D3 107). During 1931, when she was most acutely aware of the threat development posed to her solitary and unimpeded access to the downs, she dwelled repeatedly on the pleasures of taking long walks over them. For example, in August, she sought relief in walking: “Sometimes I feel the world desperate; then walk among the downs” (D4 39). In October of 1934, she exclaimed, “Oh the joy of walking! I’ve never felt it so strong in me[,] […] the trance like, swimming, flying through the air; the current of sensations & ideas; & the slow, but fresh change of down, of road, of colour: all this churned up into a fine thin sheet of perfect calm happiness” (D4 246). In August of 1937, she said that composing Three Guineas “has kept me completely submerged from 10 to one every morning; & driven me like a motor in the head over the downs to Piddinghoe &c every afternoon from 2 to 4” (D5 111). Finally, when dread of the oncoming war clouded her mind, she again resorted to walking, though less as a spur to the moving imagination and more to dull its range: “I ride across the downs with dread of the oncoming war clouded my mind, she again resorted to walking, though less as a spur to the moving imagination and more to dull its range: “I ride across the downs to the Cliffs. A roll of barbed wire is hooped on the edge. I rubbed my mind brisk along the Newhaven road. […] [T]ire the body & the mind sleeps” (D5 347).

4 These landscape polarities are interestingly combined in Bonnie Kime Scott’s figure of “the hollow in the wave” (2 and passim).

5 I assume the reference here is to the furniture store, Heal’s, which has been in business since 1810 and has a bed-buying guide currently available on-line: <http://www.heals.co.uk/buying+care-guides/bed-buying-guide/pcat/bedroomfurniture/>.

6 The reference to thistles on the downs here and elsewhere (D4 34) recall the opening chapter of W. H. Hudson’s 1900 book, Nature in Downland, a 1923 edition of which is in the Woolfs’ working Library at WSU. “Thistle-Down” is a set-piece describing some hours spent on the top of a down near Lewes watching the silvery balls, reminiscent of the great masses of thistledown Hudson used to ride through on the pampas as a boy, fly past him (3-5 and passim). Hudson’s reference to the “sea of downland” (3) is in sympathy with Woolf’s frequent allusions to the downs as waves. His vivid account of thrushes killing snails in the chapter on the small or “fairy fauna” of the downs (53) might have inspired some of the interludes in The Waves. Certainly his ability to fully empathize and humanize the animals of the area is in keeping with Woolf’s ability to see things through the eyes of birds, insects, dogs, and other animals. Many other correspondences between Woolf and Hudson could profitably be explored. For more on Woolf and Hudson, especially their attention to birds, see Gillespie.

7 I have Googled in vain for any poem using this expression. It sounds a bit like Gerard Manley Hopkins, but the only other occurrence I can find of this phrase is Woolf’s own in the draft of “A Scene from the Past” in which the hollyhocks at Freshwater “grew in the wind warm hollow to twenty feet of more” (qtd. in Ellis 176).

8 Since Mark Hussey’s new monograph, ‘I’d Make It Penal’: The Rural Preservation Movement in Virginia Woolf’s Between the Acts, so usefully summarizes Woolf’s reaction to suburban development around Rodmell, I have decided not to dwell on it for this paper.

9 Scott indicates that the word “hollow” appears more than sixty times in Woolf’s novels (9).

10 Herbert Marder has some useful insights on how the rhythm of walking merged with the rhythm of writing to spur Woolf’s creativity (79 and passim).
This peripatetic movement over the downs frequently evoked the animals who might live there, in fantasy or reality. In August of 1930, their yellow color made the downs “like couchant lions,” an image repeated in a 1937 letter to Vanessa (L 420; L 153). More frequent are the evocations of birds, and here again we see her figurative imagery echoing varied ways of relating to the downs. On a wet and windy birthday in 1930, she and Leonard walked among the downs, which were “like the folded wings of grey birds” (D 285)—couchant and stable like the lions, an image of being surrounded in comfort and security. But in 1932, she described the “old habitual beauty of England,” in more active avian terms: “the downs soaring, like birds wings sweeping up and up” (D 124)—an image similar to one conjured in the essay “Old Mrs. Gray,” written in the same year, of “untrodden grass; wild birds flying; hills whose smooth uprise continue that wild flight” (DM 17). At times, running on her own last name, she also characterized herself as a wolf on the downs. During the heat of August in 1938, she playfully wrote Lady Tewkesmene that, “this Wolf is so hot after walking on the downs, she can’t write!” (L 262). The intense cold of the winter of 1941 drew out a mixed metaphor of animal identification: “Our hearts are warm, but oh the cold here! Driving snow; downs white; birds frozen; and my hand a mere claw. [. . .] The old Wolves huddle like rooks alone on their tree-top” (L 457).\(^{11}\)

Whether ranging over them or huddling in and under them, the downs were Woolf’s necessary natural habitat. Both a beast and a bird, both crouched low and perched high, she participated in their lived reality. A 1927 meditation on summer vacations at Monk’s House serves as a final summary of the complexity of her relationship to their hollows and hills:

> Often down here I have entered into a sanctuary; a nunnery; had a religious retreat; of great agony once; & always some terror: so afraid one is of loneliness: of seeing to the bottom of the vessel. That is one of the experiences I have had here in some Augusts; & got then to a consciousness of what I call ‘reality’: a thing I see before me; something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest & continue to exist. Reality I call it. And I fancy sometimes this is the most necessary thing to me: that which I seek. (D 196)

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\(^{11}\) Marder points out how the coincidence of Lytton Strachey’s death and the building of the galvanized iron sheds on the banks of the Ouse in January of 1931 merged into an over-all sense of desolation for Woolf (79), and a similar pathetic fallacy haunts the last months of her life when the frozen whiteness of the downs seems both a projection and an echo of her own state of emotional paralysis.

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**TRULY MISCELLANEOUS**

The “Increasing” Black Population in Virginia Woolf’s Fiction\(^1\)

Virginia Woolf died seventy years ago. The British society in which she lived is receding. It is now in many ways unimaginably different from her day. It does not require statistics to remind us that we live in a multicultural society, nor that, prior to the extensive immigration from ex-colonies in the 1950s and after, there were comparatively few

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\(^{1}\) Editor’s note: This article was previously published in Issue 37 of the *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* (May 2011): 32-36.
Caribbean, African and Asian populations in Britain. 2 Woolf joked in A Room of One’s Own (1929) that “one will say, ‘I saw a woman today,’ as one used to say, ‘I saw an aeroplane.’ Anything may happen when womanhood has ceased to be a protected occupation” (A Room of One’s Own 40). If she had written instead, “as one says, ‘I saw a Negro today,’” this would have been perfectly comprehensible to her readers. Indeed, while her readers might have expected the skies to be increasingly filled with airplanes (as Woolf implies), they would not have expected to see a huge influx of immigrants.

Between the wars, the accepted non-prejudicial terms were ‘negro’ and ‘negress’ (with or without an initial capital). Here are a few examples. In Orlando: A Biography (1929), Orlando replies to Shelmerdine: “Yes, negroes are seductive, aren’t they?” (O 258). In The Waves (1931), the boy Neville thinks about his knife: “The big blade is an emperor; the broken blade a Negro” (19). In The Years (1937), Sara tells Martin that once in winter she came to Hyde Park, “and there was a negro, laughing aloud in the snow” (237). Much has (and more will be) written about the representation of inter-racial power relationships in Woolf’s writing, but my concern in this brief article is about not misinterpreting the words Woolf uses.

The word ‘nigger’ became unacceptable, but lingered on in expressions: the color, ‘nigger brown’; ‘a nigger in the woodpile’; in The Years, when Eleanor is sunburned from her overseas travels, she is “‘Burnt as brown as a nigger!”’ (Y 343); and of course Miss La Trobe: “Down among the bushes she worked like a nigger” (150). Probably, Conrad’s The Nigger of the “Narcissus”: A Tale of the Sea (1897) would have been re-titled if it had been published between the wars (it was published as The Children of the Sea: A Tale of the Forecastle in the U.S.A.), but Agatha Christie’s Ten Little Niggers (1939) was still just acceptable in Britain (but not in the U.S.A.)—how else could one have referred to the nursery rhyme? Even today, ‘nigger minstrels’ would be a correct term for an historical phenomenon—and ‘Negro minstrels’ completely wrong or at best ambiguous—but ‘blackface minstrels’ is more acceptable. The astonishingly successful BBC television program that ran from 1958 to 1978 was called The Black and White Minstrel Show—all the men were blacked up, while no woman was. In Orlando, ‘nigger’ was acceptable in referring to the “dead nigger’s head” (O 73; see also 309) in the Elizabthan period, reminding us of the opening sentence of the novel: “He—for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it—was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters” (O 13).

Also acceptable in Woolf’s day (and for many years after) was the use of ‘black,’ but only where this was clear, as in the titles of such books as The Black Man’s Place in South Africa (1922) by Peter Nielsen; Savage Life in the Black Sudan (1927) by C.W. Domville-Fife; South Africa, White and Black—or Brown? (1927) by P.A. Silburn; Black Democracy: The Story of Haiti (1929) by H.P. Davies; and White and Black in Africa (1930) by J.H. Oldham. Or these two articles in the Nation and Athenæum: “The Black Man’s Burden To-day” (28 March 1925, 879–80) and “The Exploited Black” (4 May 1929, 168, 170), a review of White Capital and Coloured Labour by Lord Olivier (Hogarth Press, 1929). The key concept is clarity. “When I think of the Greeks I think of them as naked black men,” says Miss Allan in The Voyage Out, “which is quite incorrect, I’m sure” (114); but no one is going to mistake her meaning. However, what was clear to Woolf is not necessarily always clear to readers today. It seems as if the following will need footnotes in future annotated editions of Woolf’s works, in order to prevent readers from populating Woolf’s fiction with Africans and Asians who are not actually there.

2 For a discussion of a now-discredited report, see Henry A. Mess’s “Coloured Families in English Ports,” which concludes: “The committee responsible for the report hold that the only really satisfactory solution would be the exclusion of African seamen from English ports, and that this is desirable in the interests of both races” (586).

3 Many people used ‘black’ to mean black-haired.

4 The Later TS has “a stout black lady” (318).

5 A deleted passage in “The Hours”: The British Manuscript of Mrs. Dalloway has: “& how maternal as she was with an exquisite maternally; for there was a mournfulness in the flow of the black expressed the mournful tenderness of a mother . . . .” (15).

6 See also: “He is dead. . . . He lies on a camp-bed, bandaged, in some hot Indian hospital while coolies squatted on the floor agitate those fans—I forget how they call them” (W 153).
Unfortunately, this seems to be scholarship misapplied. Although not conclusive, the draft suggests slightly more clearly that “black” is an adjective: “all the exalted statues, the black, the spectacular images of great soldiers, stood in Trafalgar Square looking ahead of them . . . ” (12).

When Woolf uses language that is not acceptable today, we should not unthinkingly convict her of racism. In the last essay published in her lifetime, Woolf with typical irony mocked the reaction of eighteenth-century society to Mrs Thrale’s marrying Gabriel Piozzi:

[its] conventions [have] become obsolete and ridiculous. An Italian music master in the eighteenth century was, we must suppose, equal to a negro to-day. To explain the conduct of the Streatham set we must imagine the attitude of society to-day to a lady of rank who has contracted an alliance with a negro and expects Mayfair to open its doors to her dusky and illegitimate brood.7 (“Mrs. Thrale” 295)

Let us end, however, with Virginia Woolf’s most positive, unequivocal, un-ironic statement: “swear that you will do all in your power to insist that any woman who enters any profession shall in no way hinder any other human being, whether man or woman, white or black, provided that he or she is qualified to enter that profession, from entering it; but shall do all in her power to help them” (“Three Guineas” 101).

Stuart N. Clarke

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7 See n.1 about Nancy Cunard and Letters, no. 2760, 8 July [1933](202).
periodical studies can do for Woolf studies and vice versa. He cautions against returning to the canonical author centered use of periodicals, a focus away from which recent work in the field of modernist magazines has been moving. Scholars of magazines, such as Adam McKible and Suzanne Churchill, condemn the ‘strip-mining’ of periodicals for the works of canonical authors and instead advocate for a return to periodicals as publications in their own right (Little Magazines and Modernism 2007). How can one reconcile such an approach with single-author studies, Collier asks? In his essay, Collier lets “the periodical itself [. . .] upstage Woolf,” reading her “Patron and the Crocus” for what its content and placement in the Nation & Athenaeum and the New Republic can tell us about, among other things, periodical readership and periodical patronage (154).

A number of other pieces in the volume pick up Collier’s call to look at periodicals. Thus, Melissa Sullivan’s chapter argues for Woolf’s engagement in a broader literary arena, a middlebrow arena, via her publication of two pieces of A Room of One’s Own in Lady Rhonda’s Time and Tide following its initial publication in book form. Other pieces on periodicals include Elizabeth Dickens’s chapter on Leonard Woolf’s religion questionnaire in the Nation—an illustration of his understanding of the potential for dialogue offered by the periodical form; Yuzu Uchida’s analysis of Woolf’s contributions to and ‘misappropriation’ by the American New Humanist magazine The Bookman; Eliza Bolchi’s chapter on Woolf’s appearance in Italian periodicals; and Caroline Pollentier’s essay on Woolf, the familiar essay and middlebrowism. While acknowledging Woolf’s ambivalent relationship with the periodical press, as does Collier, Beth Daugherty shows how periodicals represented a forum for Woolf’s early apprenticeship as a writer, with a focus on three early reviews, written in 1905 and 1906.

Another important area covered in the volume is Woolf’s attention to the successes of other writers. Katie Maanimara’s “How One Strikes a Contemporary” looks at how “Woolf becomes a professional writer with Mansfield serving as both an inspiring instigator and an ardent antagonist” (92); and Heather Bean’s essay looks at Woolf’s changing relationship with Emily Bronte in terms of her own and Bronte’s relationship with the literary marketplace. Karen Leick revisits Flush, The Years and “The Duchess and the Jeweller” from the perspective of a link she sees Woolf making between making money from writing, “intellectual prostitution,” and Jewishness in terms of Gertrude Stein (122).

A third set of chapters show that while Woolf might have been free of publishers in her capacity as part owner of the Hogarth Press, she was very conscious of their reading public. Vara Neverow uses the holograph of Woolf’s Jacob’s Room (1922) to show Woolf’s self-censorship in consideration of her reading public; Jeanette McVicker’s chapter shows Woolf battling resistance in a cultural marketplace via her readings of the Greeks; and John K. Young’s essay on the Hogarth Press explores how Woolf’s editing and publishing work (underestimated in their extent, according to Young) affected her own writing. His chapter reminds us of the incredible potential for further work on the Press, about to hit the centenary of its founding in 2017.

Expanding the collection in terms of time and space, Dubino includes a second essay on Woolf in Italy by Sara Villa, alongside Bolchi’s essay also on Italy (and Yuzu Uchida’s on the U.S.), covering the translation of Orlando into Italian in Fascist Italy. Villa’s chapter reminds us of the insights one can gain into the marketplace via translation studies. Jenny Falcetta’s essay on cover art for Woolf’s work over time as marketing tool closes the collection.

In its breadth, Dubino’s collection highlights the potential for further work involving Woolf in this exciting and emerging field of study. 

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REVIEW
WOOLF’S TO THE LIGHTHOUSE: A READER’S GUIDE

Mark Hussey has noted, “More has been written about To the Lighthouse than about any of Woolf’s other books. The vast terrain of scholarship on the novel is daunting” (lxv). One therefore must question the value of adding another volume to the pile, particularly when there are many useful collections of scholarly essays that allow one to dig deeper into Woolf’s fifth novel. However, Janet Winston’s Reader’s Guide to the novel will reward both the first-time and the veteran reader of Woolf’s beloved text.

The goal for Winston’s project (as for the entire “Reader’s Guide” series by Continuum) is to engage the new reader’s appreciation for a classic, but potentially difficult, novel. Like Daugherty and Pringle before her, Winston approaches the text as a teacher who recognizes the novel’s aesthetic challenges. Describing “a curious split” among both graduate and undergraduate students as they encounter Woolf’s novel for the first time, she notes that some “take to the novel enthusiastically,” while others “feel a sense of, either singly or in combination, frustration, boredom, and alienation” (40). Miraculously, Winston has been able to design a reader’s guide that will not only serve both sets of students, but their teachers as well.

Interpretive guides and introductions for To the Lighthouse typically include five basic components: explanation of the novel’s autobiographical roots, description of Woolf’s composing process, analysis of the novel’s formal innovations, thematic interpretation and character exploration, and reviews of the work’s critical reception. Some volumes (such as those authored or edited by Cowley, Davies, Daugherty and Pringle, Goldman, Hussey, Raitt, Kelley, and Vogler) ably serve a scholarly reader, while others (such as available downloads from
Winston’s slim guide is certainly designed for the scholarly reader and includes all of these elements as well. The first chapter focuses on the contexts that inform the novel, drawing on a thoughtful array of primary and secondary sources to describe the Stephen family, the Bloomsbury Group, the politics of the time, and Woolf’s personal relationships with Vanessa Bell and Vita Sackville-West. Winston then moves on to examine the novel’s form and style, once more using a combination of sources to provide helpful strategies for understanding the novel’s aesthetic experimentations. The third chapter is particularly rich, devoted to reading the novel’s literal and figurative themes of marriage, artistry, affection, and silence. Here, Winston exhibits her adeptness at balancing discussion of Woolf’s stated goals (as witnessed in her letters and diaries) with the revelations of the text itself. Winston completes the volume with three focused chapters that discuss the novel’s critical reception; review adaptations in drama, cinema, and the visual arts; and explore an extensive bibliography.

So if Winston’s project surveys territory mapped by others, and many others at that, what are her contributions to the study of To the Lighthouse? For me, there are several. First of all, Winston extends and updates extant bibliographies on the novel, including refreshed links to the resources available online and through electronic readers. Her prose is clear, cogent, and scholarly, offering lifelines to frustrated readers and intriguing trails of breadcrumbs to those who wish to learn more about the science, metaphysics, music, or intertextual allusions of the novel.

Furthermore, Winston’s balanced perspective allows her to present both Woolf and her characters as complex and sometimes contradictory individuals. Winston’s evenhanded treatment of Woolf’s politics demonstrates to readers that Woolf’s attitudes toward the unprivileged were at times laudatory and at other times appalling (4-7). Winston respects the complexity of Woolf’s characters as well—for example, seeing Mr. Ramsay as “at once galling and gallant” (50)—thus, providing an affectionate criticism of the Ramsay family dynamics.

Winston also opens new portals to the study of the novel. For example, Winston goes beyond the traditional condemnation of the 1983 BBC production to review theatrical and radio adaptations of To the Lighthouse and traces a history of the novel’s resonance with visual artists from Vanessa Bell through Suzanne Bellamy. Color plates would have been helpful here, but in their absence, Winston provides online links to the images in her bibliography.

Most importantly, Winston never wavers from her role as a guide and teacher, offering effective interpretive questions that utilize simple steps to facilitate complex analysis. While discussion questions have certainly become prevalent through “book club” editions of popular novels, Winston’s questions are clearly framed and helpful, whether for teachers running out of time to prepare for class or for independent readers. For example, at the end of her chapter on the language and form of the novel, Winston guides readers to online versions and audio recordings of Cowper’s and Tennyson’s quoted poems. She provides background on each poem, and asks her readers to think about the tone of each poem on its own through examination of language and rhythm. She then returns the reader to the placement of these poems within Woolf’s novel, asking us to consider the mood of these moments, the demeanor of Mr. Ramsay, and the effect of including these fragments within these scenes.

She also provides focused reading strategies, using textual symbols (like the lighthouse), Woolf’s diaries, or critical comments to help readers draw their own conclusions. For example, at the end of her third chapter, Winston includes the following question:

Woolf commented in her diary that she wanted the sound of the sea to be heard throughout To the Lighthouse (3:34). Did she achieve this goal? If so, where in the novel do you hear the sea? What literary devices does Woolf employ to create this effect? . . . You may want to compare the places in the novel where you hear the sea to those passages in which characters comment about seeing the sea. (71)

Elsewhere, Winston includes with her questions references to critical essays that are particularly illuminating on the topic at hand. As a result, the independent reader will gain a helpful arsenal of reading strategies; the teacher will gain a well-constructed lesson plan.

What I truly value about Winston’s guide is that it is always helpful but never simplistic. The rich complexity of Virginia Woolf’s novel is preserved, even as Janet Winston renders it more accessible. Woolfians will recognize a colleague, even as their students will recognize an expert teacher.

Meg Albrinek
Lakeland College

Works Cited
Maud Ellmann’s *The Nets of Modernism* is frequently demanding—and never less than fascinating. The connections among the various discussions at times seem elusive, but they always ultimately, and enlighteningly, reveal themselves.

The key connections are those indicated in Ellmann’s title, as—quoting James’s comment that “really . . . relations stop nowhere”—she investigates how specific works by James, Woolf, Joyce, and Freud “confront the entangled nature of the self, caught in the nets of intersubjectivity and intertextuality . . . that violate the limits of identity” (1). But a number of other interwoven motifs appear as well, including some that Ellmann explores with specific attention to *To the Lighthouse*.

For example, Ellmann presents a learned (and witty) literary and cultural history of the navel, arguing that “while Lacan regards the castration fantasy as the open sesame to the symbolic order, and identifies the symbolic phallus with the name-of-the-father, the present study proposes that the navel memorializes a pre-symbolic order under the aegis of the nameless mother” (9). Another strain in the book concentrates on rats, which Ellmann claims dominate “the modernist imagination, largely because rats are associated with the networks characteristic of modernity—the sewers, subways, pipes, and railway lines, as well as the mazes of the scientific laboratory,” the “Daedalian labyrinths of urban life” (12). Her expansions on that theme are so intriguing that I personally wished for still another one, and that she had brought in Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*. But not surprisingly, and as the term “Daedalean” suggests, she devotes a good deal of her book to Joyce.

First, however, she has a brilliant chapter on *The Ambassadors*, and the way James pursues the “heterodox and volatile” truth he “gives the name of ‘Paris’” (46). Of course in that discussion she never brings in Woody Allen, but her analysis of the novel’s networks and themes reveals how much one could see *Midnight in Paris* as a re-imagination of *The Ambassadors* (“Live all you can: it’s a mistake not to”). Instead, the visual art she brings in is Hans Holbein’s painting *The Ambassadors*, with its famous and powerful distorted death’s head in the foreground—Holbein’s *carpe diem*, his “live all you can.” Within that chapter, Ellmann also compares the position of the death’s head in the painting “to the ‘line through the middle’ of Lily Briscoe’s picture in *To the Lighthouse*: ‘both Lily’s line and Holbein’s skull are ways of making ‘nothing’ visible’” (58). Comparable to James’s remark that “relations stop nowhere” is Darwin’s that all nature “is bound together by an inextricable web of relations” (169), which Ellmann uses to good effect in her exploration of the connections between humans and animals essential to her comparison (169), which Ellmann uses to good effect in her exploration of the connections between humans and animals essential to her comparison.

As I write, most U.S. troops have returned from Iraq. Many remain, however, in combat situations in Afghanistan and on bases around the globe. Samet’s book, covering the decade between 1997 and 2007, reminds us of a world before 9/11 and then situates us in a predominately Iraq context, but its lessons about our military and our teaching remain pertinent.

What would Virginia Woolf think, I wondered as I read, about a woman teaching literature at a military academy whose students include women and whose curriculum includes *A Room of One’s Own* (but not *Three Guineas*)? And what would she make of Professor Samet’s way of teaching literature, including the Thayer Method of active learning developed at West Point between 1817 and 1833, so different from the lecturing done by Raleigh and Leavis? In making her own views about the war in Iraq clear almost immediately (“unconvinced,” “dismayed,” “deep sorrow and anger” [13]), Samet introduces the reader to her memoir’s complexity and ambivalence early. Her memoir is littered with paradoxes, such as soldiers “must be
‘all heart’ yet have no hearts at all” (14). Her book educates pacifist and anti-war readers about a military often stereotyped as stupid at best and brutal at worst. I did not know, for example, that soldiers are duty-bound to disobey immoral or unlawful orders and that such a duty explains why the abuses at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib have been experienced as a “personal and professional affront” (166) to military professionals and teachers of ethics at West Point. But her book educates hawkish readers, too, about ethical dissent, for example, and the difference between genuine patriotism and its unthinking variety. Samet often walks a thoughtful line between defense and critique. For example, in a section about cadets’ cynicism, she confesses to disliking civilian cynicism about cadets even more, the “automatic assumption that every soldier must be a bloodthirsty killer” (171), the shock at the idea of cadets reading (178). And while she makes clear that the literature she teaches at West Point actively resists the glorification of war, she also makes clear that the seduction of the battlefield runs very deep within the culture her students operate in, and by culture, she does not mean just West Point or the United States.

Just as she asks hard questions of her West Point students, encouraging them to think through the complexities and paradoxes of their chosen career, she asks hard questions of herself, her teaching, and her readers. As Samet struggles with what teaching literature should do for her students, she illuminates the history of the military in the United States and reminds readers about ideals such as the citizen soldier, dedicated to acting responsibly and with restraint, to being both a fighting and thinking person. I learned a great deal about the ambivalence United States founders had about the military and about the ambivalence lying at the core of West Point: the tension many institutions currently experience between training and education is writ even larger there. I learned a great deal about West Point’s educational history and traditions, about educators like the English Department’s Lucius Holt and Terry Freeman, about the memoirs of graduates like Ulysses S. Grant, and about the writing on war done by Ambrose Bierce.

Although I could not forget I was reading about a particular kind of student—indeed, Samet’s work illustrates, if we didn’t know it already, that much of teaching, like real estate, is location, location, location—I was also frequently reminded that some things transcend location: curriculum decisions at the institution level that must be translated into reading decisions at the classroom level; the class you dread going to and the class that slowly turns around (sometimes one and the same); the concerns about aims, methods, and classroom atmosphere; the students who grow and challenge you and tug at your heart. More than an illuminating history of West Point and the military in the U.S., more than a discussion of contemporary morality as it relates to IEDs, Abu Ghraib, and Guantánamo, more than a fascinating glimpse into the Army and its culture, this is a memoir about teaching, about reading, about writing. Anyone interested in literature and pedagogy will learn from and be inspired by Elizabeth Samet.

I liked this book even as it made me uncomfortable. Indeed, Samet’s memoir models the best classrooms, where discomfort and enjoyment work in tandem to produce learning. I liked Samet’s students, among them Nick, Brad, Joey, Andy, and Max; I liked her colleagues, among them Al, Dan, Bill, and the Colonel; and I certainly liked the teacher who emerged in these pages. She—and they—are honest. She can critique and laugh at herself, and she works to educate officers who can do the same. Since the U.S. has a standing army, it is good that our founders saw the need for civilian leadership. Since we train young people for war, it is good that West Point has many of the same goals for its students as any other institution of higher learning does. Since we have institutions like West Point, it is good that the complexities of literary treatments of war and peace are included in students’ curriculum. And if we have literature classes at West Point, it is very good that Samet is teaching some of those classes.

Because Samet is an extraordinary teacher, intentional and thoughtful in so much of what she does, she also is a good memoirist, confronting the complexity of her life, her decision, her motivations, and her mistakes. As she works to communicate how cadets and officers “negotiate the multiple contradictions of their private and professional worlds” (13), she begins, ends, and threads her memoir with the confusions and doubts she feels about her own function. In the process, she educates civilians about what an education at West Point entails (including its core curriculum and numerous majors), what her students’ sacrifices are and what they mean, what texts she teaches, and how her students respond to those texts. Samet includes a fascinating chapter on the role of literature at West Point or the United States.

Although Woolf does not overtly appear in the book very often—most prominently, in Samet’s excellent chapter about women in the military—Samet’s title and epigraph from a 1916 medical journal recall Septimus Smith, and she notes that one young man thinks Orlando should be required reading for every soldier. After confessing she did not get it as an undergraduate, Samet calls A Room of One’s Own one of the most important books she has read and notes how its call for privacy powerfully reverberates in the context of a military academy. She also consistently asks her students and her readers to use the Woolfian strategy of holding two truths or attitudes inside one’s head at once. Perhaps most important, Woolf’s Three Guineas hovers over this text as Samet introduces the reader to thoughtful officers, including one who refuses to wear most of his ribbons, and shares her own moral dilemmas as she works to teach young people about war’s moral dilemmas. I did not want to like this book, but I did, primarily because Samet lets no one off the hook, including herself.

One can only hope that the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans returning to school in an attempt to rebuild their lives have teachers with hearts like that of Elizabeth Samet’s.

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Otterbein University

**REVIEW**

**VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE**

Judith Allen’s *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* is a welcome addition to the ongoing conversations about Virginia Woolf’s essays and the relevance of her politics. Between the 1997 publication of Jeanne Dubino and Beth Carole Rosenberg’s *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* and the current availability of the six-volume *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, meticulously edited by Andrew McNeillie (volumes 1 through 4) and Stuart N. Clarke (volumes 5 and 6), critical consensus has been growing in support of the claim that Woolf is not only one of the twentieth century’s greatest novelists but also one of the greatest essayists.
In articles and papers about the essays since the early 1990s, Allen has enhanced appreciation for the important influence of Michel de Montaigne on Woolf. Woolf’s relationship with the sixteenth-century Montaigne is the starting point in *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* for Allen’s incisive discussion of Woolf’s attention to the power of words. Allen illustrates how Woolf’s “essayistic” practice, developed in part through lifelong reading of Montaigne, allows for engagement and interaction with the reader that provides a model of cultural critique and invigorated political analysis. Devising her own discursive style to discuss the narrative and rhetorical strategies of Montaigne and Woolf, Allen examines how they theorize reading and language, and explores intersections between the language of politics and the politics of language throughout Woolf’s work. In the process, she achieves her overall goal to demonstrate the relevance of Woolf’s critical writing practice to our political circumstances, “a world where uncertainty reigns, where so-called democracies are insidiously dismantled, human rights are lost, coercive practices continue, dissent is silenced, and simply reading the ‘words’ placed before us has become a daunting task” (12).

Woolf, who received Montaigne’s essays as a gift from her brother in 1903, describes Montaigne in an early essay as “the first of the moderns” and the originator of the personal essay (23). Allen conveys how his writing influences the way Woolf threads language and ideas together in essays such as “The Decay of Essay-Writing” (1905), “A Book of Essays” (1918), “The Elizabethan Lumber Room” (1925), and “Montaigne” (1925). Informed by Bakhtin’s dialogic theory, she gathers evidence from among their works that shows the multiple, disparate voices their essays embody. For example, she reveals how both essayists recontextualize words to complicate their metaphorical power, and establish complex conversations that introduce varied voices and perspectives with which to challenge the dominant power. Her reading of “The Leaning Tower” (1940) traces how Woolf develops, then questions her theory of writing, illustrating how the style and the content, “the theorising, the questioning of theorising—and the eventual undermining of ‘theorising’—is set before the reader, as the ‘theorising’ continues unabated.” (22). These contradictory moves, which Allen finds throughout the work of Woolf and Montaigne, are, as she writes, “an important quality for the ‘essayistic,’ as it reflects its resistance to singularity, to fixity, to the limitations of generic labels, as well as its need for the clash of oppositional voices” (27).

“‘Theorising’ Reading, ‘Theorising’ Language,” the first part of this three-part book, includes Allen’s original reading of Woolf’s 1937 essay “Craftsmanship,” which explores Woolf’s resistance to definition, category, and hierarchy and celebrates Woolf’s vision of the vitality of words, “‘the wildest, freest, most irresponsible, most unteachable of all things’” (44). Connecting Woolf’s rapture with words to her dilemma in *A Room of One’s Own*, Allen analyzes Woolf’s lexicon of war and the politics of Woolf’s feminist writerly strategies in *A Room*, revealing political associations that tie the wildness of feminism to the wildness of anticolonialism and that critique “the varied modes of the exclusion and degradation of women, of the Other” (70).

Such analysis of Woolf’s ongoing recontextualizing of words and metaphors prepares the reader for the third and final part of Allen’s book, “Dialogue and Dissent.” If “but” and “wild” are the words that represent the politics of Woolf’s feminist practice, words of war inspire her “call for a different kind of language, some new ways of communicating or even negotiating” (85). Focusing on “Thoughts of Peace in an Air Raid” and “Three Guineas,” Allen analyzes Woolf’s lexicon of war and concludes: “For Virginia Woolf, the ‘essay’ fights a battle similar to her own, for it also stands outside, resisting stasis and rigid definition, and takes its place beside women and other marginalized figures in order to critique the conventions and ceremonies of those in power” (88).

Throughout *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language*, Allen builds compelling support for her central thesis that Woolf’s writing methods satisfy our own needs for new strategies to confront the political and militaristic language that bombards us in defense of the indefensible. In return, we can imagine, along with Allen, Woolf’s appreciation for the “Not Ready to Make Nice” of the Dixie Chicks, the satirical “truthiness” of Stephen Colbert, and the disruption of language and power by the Occupy Movement. Allen opens her book with the famous question posed by Montaigne and appropriated by Woolf, “Que sais-je?” (1), showing how this and other rhetorical questions create space for alternate perspectives. During recent Occupy Education events in California, a different question was posed and recontextualized by twenty-first century activists. On 4 March 2012, students marched from Oakland and San Francisco to the state capitol in Sacramento, displaying their colorful signs with playful and creative slogans—“Fund Our Future,” “How Will I Learn to Spell?,” and “Tax the 1%.” However, the words on the protest sign that stood out amongst all others appropriated a question familiar to all of us. With its political critique of discursive practices Judith Allen’s *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* illuminates how these student activists are able to reinvigorate with new meaning the familiar when they ask, with seriousness and resolve, and not a little irony—“Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”

_Eileen Barrett_  
_California State University, East Bay_

_Works Cited_


Call for submissions—a special issue of *Woolf Studies Annual* on Virginia Woolf and Jews/Jewishness

The 2013 volume of *Woolf Studies Annual* will be devoted to the topic of Jews and/or Jewishness. We are less interested in the question of whether or not Woolf herself was or was not anti-Semitic (except insofar as this can be articulated in readings of her texts) than in how the figure of the Jew operates within her work.

The special issue is not limited to work on Virginia Woolf herself, but also will welcome contributions on Leonard Woolf, and on the Bloomsbury milieu. In addition to full-length articles, we also envisage a forum of short commentary, and an annotated bibliography.

**Forum**

We invite brief commentary of up to 750 words on a relevant writing: for example, from the “Present Day” chapter of *The Years*, “The Duchess and the Jeweller,” “Street Haunting,” *Three Guineas*, *Between the Acts*, and elsewhere. There is no limitation on what you might select.

Additionally, we welcome brief statements in response to the following broad questions:

- How do Woolf’s representations of Jews compare with those of other modernist writers?
- How have treatments of Woolf’s anti-Semitism/prejudice figured within Woolf scholarship?
- In treating this topic within Woolf’s work, what are the salient issues?
- What is the relation between her fiction and the extensive biographical record of Woolf’s comments/ruminations about Jews and Jewishness available in her letters, diaries, and memoirs?

A number of such brief commentaries and statements would then be shared for response, and the opportunity for dialogue enabled, with the resulting texts published as a forum on the topic.

**Annotated Bibliography**

Recommendations for previously published scholarship and sources on the topic are also welcome and will be included as an annotated bibliography in the special issue.

**Deadlines**

Forum commentaries/statements: June 30, 2012

Full-length articles (8,000-10,000 words): August 30, 2012.

(N.B. WSA submission guidelines apply—see [http://www.pace.edu/press/journals/woolf-studies-annual](http://www.pace.edu/press/journals/woolf-studies-annual))

Annotated Bibliography recommendations: November 15, 2012

(General articles on any topic may continue to be submitted for consideration.)

**PLEASE DIRECT ALL CORRESPONDENCE, INQUIRIES, AND SUBMISSIONS TO**

<woolfstudiesannual@gmail.com>
The Society Column continued from page 32 . . .

Celebrations! Besides alerting you to Woolf deadlines (or should I say lifelines?) looming, I wanted to share celebratory meetings accomplished; the Seattle MLA was delightful for Woolf Studies; we shared inspiring panels and a divine dinner. Our dinner party participants were a sportive crew:

Leslie K. Hankins  
Celia Marshik  
Suzette Henke and her guest Jim  
Emily Kopley  
Karen Kukil  
Lauren Elkin  
Sydney J. Kaplan  
Emory Abbott  
Yuan-Jung Cheng and her guest  
Sally Jacobson  
Emily Dalgarno  
Erica Delsandro  
Kristin Czarnecki  
Beth Rigel Daugherty  
Evelyn Haller  
Madelyn Detloff  
Sarah Dunlap  
Adriana Vargas  
Alison Lacivita  
Steve Kern

Our delighted thanks to Emily Phillips and Georgia Johnston, who arranged it all, and to the devoted staff at the Blueacre Seafood Restaurant in Seattle who made the evening sublime. It was a triumph; “it partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity . . . .”

Between the Lines: MLA Panels in Seattle:  
The Women of the Woolf: Influence, Affinity, Obscurity program arranged by Brenda S. Helt launched the IVWS panels at MLA with challenges to Woolf’s arguments by two women in the first half of the 20th century and a thoughtful critique of the role her name plays in the modernist canon. Denise Ayo presented on Mary Colum’s critical response to Woolf, in Colum’s article “Are Women Outsiders?” and, from another angle, Renee Dickinson outlined Olive Moore’s repudiation of AROO. Meghan Marie Hammond, beginning with a smart critique on the problematic role VW’s name plays in Mansfield studies, approached Ling Shuhua, through the phrase, “the Chinese Katherine Mansfield.” Many thanks to Brenda Helt for arranging this dynamic and rich panel, and to Madelyn Detloff for chairing in her absence.

On Friday, the Home and the Domestic: Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing program arranged by the International Virginia Woolf Society and the Doris Lessing Society, Dorian Stuber, in her eye-opening close reading of two ruined houses penned by Woolf and Lessing, argued that Lessing complicated Woolf’s version of domestic space resurrected. In her paper, Lauren Rich noted that the negative aspect of party consciousness is almost totally absent from Woolf criticism. Her deft analysis of the dinner party scene in TTL (“already the past”) explored modernity’s influence on food and dining in everyday life through such phenomena as the mechanization of the domestic middleclass kitchen and changing roles of women. Yuan-Jung Cheng’s Foucauldian approach to home and family in Woolf and Lessing considered the home as part of technologies of power, the site for disciplining citizens, to consider the way Woolf demystifies family with her satire, and the way Lessing shows how the home and family discipline and normalize woman. Tanya Krause and Suzette Henke did a wonderful job crafting this ground-breaking and thought-provoking panel.

Saturday’s Institutional Woolf Program, arranged by the International Virginia Woolf Society, brought another set of stellar papers thanks to Amanda Golden who planned and presided over this wide-ranging and rewarding panel. Emily Kopley excavated literary history in her paper, “Improving on ‘A Dog’s Chance’: A Room of One’s Own as a Reply to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch’s On the Art of Writing,” which demonstrated how Woolf entered into the conversation of educated men, responding to Quiller-Couch who wrote in response to Sidgwick. By extending his argument to women, Woolf turned Q-C’s argument against itself. In “Woolf in the Modern Library Series: Bridging the Gap between Academics and Common Readers,” Lise Jaillant shared the fascinating publishing history of the Modern Library Editions, using archival finds from the Random House archives (fascinating ads!) and focusing on the key year, 1928, when Woolf penned an introduction to their edition of Mrs. Dalloway. Emily Dalgarno, in “Translation in and out of the University,” used Derrida and concepts of translation to shed new light on Woolf’s use of Louis to probe the issue of translation in The Waves. Karen V. Kukil demonstrated that the Smith archives are a treasure trove in her “Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury at Smith College,” a rich investigation of women in the history of Smith who collected and shared Woolf materials.

Also on Saturday was a special session, Eros, Empathy, and Sacrifice in T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf, presided over by Gabrielle McIntire. Eve C. Sorum presented on “Empathy and Elegy in Eliot and Woolf” looking into Jacob’s Room and The Wasteland—and Worrringer’s Abstraction and Empathy. Molly Hite gave a rollicking read about parataxis and love in “How Pleasant to Kiss Mr. Eliot: Aesthetics, Erotics, and the Eliot-Woolf Connection.” John Whittier-Ferguson in “Waves of Dispossession: Rooms for the Dead (revised title) John Whittier-Ferguson, paired Rhoda of TW with the “wounded surgeon” of TSE’s “East Coker” and emphasized TSE’s affirmative Christianity.

Thank you all for enriching Woolf studies with your papers and stimulating us with your questions. Seattle proved a dazzling site for insight and camaraderie.

What a lark! What a plunge!

Your neophyte president,

Leslie Kathleen Hankins
lkhankins@gmail.com
<lthanks@cornellcollege.edu>
From Leslie Kathleen Hankins, the President of the IVWS:

IVWS Deadlines, Lifelines, Headlines and Between the Lines:
I suppose this is somewhat a State of the Society report from the President; it contains snapshots of the past, present and future delights ahead for the International Virginia Woolf Society and its members.

First, Happy 130th birthday year to VIRGINIA WOOLF! Let’s celebrate the inspiring and prolific life of Virginia Woolf throughout this milestone year. Sometimes when I hear the same old siren song about Woolf and suicide in the popular press, I want to cry out, “But enough of death; it is life that matters!” And what could be more celebratory and life affirming than to join together at conferences and conventions?

The Present: Many thanks to Ann Martin for organizing the 22nd Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf. I hope to see you at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon on June 7-10!!

The Future: Forthcoming MLA BOSTON panels for MLA 2013: The IVWS has proposed two panels, one guaranteed and one proposed (to be approved by the MLA program committee) as well as a proposed panel with an allied organization, the Joseph Conrad Society.

“Everyday Woolf”:
This panel will engage with representations and formal manifestations of everyday life in Virginia Woolf’s works, ideally spanning genres to discuss her diaries, letters, and essays, in addition to her fiction. Drawing on Woolf’s own concern with the minutiae of daily experience, papers should engage with her provocative conception of everyday life, or the ordinary day, as both “the proper stuff of fiction” and the “cotton wool” that obscures “real” life. Papers that situate the everyday historically or theoretically, or those that take an interdisciplinary approach, are especially welcome. The panel has been organized by Tara Thomson at <tst@uvic.ca>. This International Virginia Woolf Society panel will appear in the MLA program.

Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield
This panel will explore the complex relationships—both literary and personal—of these two major women modernists. Sydney Janet Kaplan <sydneyk@u.washington.edu> has organized this panel. This panel is proposed by IVWS, but will need to go through MLA program review to be accepted. The Katherine Mansfield Society is not yet an official MLA Allied Organization, but is in the process of becoming one, and the Society is actively promoting this panel.

Allied Organization panel Co-sponsored by IVWS and Joseph Conrad Society:
Conrad and Woolf: Comparative Territories
Topics for the panel might include overlapping territories, inner/outer voyages, domesticity and politics, gender and modernism. Comparative papers discussing critically neglected texts will have priority. The panel is organized by Kathryn L. Simpson <simpsokl@bham.ac.uk> and Debra Romanick Baldwin <dbaldwin@udallas.edu>

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