To the Readers: Virginia Woolf, Bloomsbury, and the War to End War

It may have been because I did not agree to join Mark Hussey’s roundtable at the 24th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf in Chicago in 2014 that I discovered the historical lynchpins for editing this special issue of the Miscellany. At the time of his invitation, Mark considered reuniting those of us whose essays were included in his 1991 collection Virginia Woolf and War for the panel. As I had already written Virginia Woolf and the Great War (1999) and the Introduction (“A Chapter on the Future”) to Jane Wood’s The Theme of Peace and War in Virginia Woolf’s War Writings (2010) several years prior to the conference, subsequently co-chairing a plenary roundtable with the contributors to Wood’s collection at the 21st Annual Conference on Woolf in Glasgow, I declined his invitation. Mark changed the direction of his panel to “Woolf and Violence,” reasoning that, given the range of writings on the topic in contexts of modernism, history, feminism, and more, “a retrospective look seemed likely to be less valuable than more current reflections” (Hussey, et al. 2).

It may well have occurred to me then that the anniversaries of both the beginning of World War I in 1914 and the U.S. entry into the fray some three years later were the rationales needed to move in a new direction. Later, as my call for papers for this issue of the Miscellany was widely distributed and the final articles selected, it became clear that the essays—not only continue the conversation we seek in the text at the time of submission. The enormous and striking painting (approximately 90½ x 240 in.) is the centerpiece in the current exhibition, as it was at an exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts (5 May-9 August 1919), about which Woolf herself wrote an article for the Athenaeum. Significantly, Woolf did her research for “The Royal Academy” during the time between the signing of the Treaty of Versailles (28 June) and Peace Day (19 July), and Woolf’s article, cited by David M. Lubin in his essay “Lies That Tell the Truth: American Artists in the Crucible of War” pointedly refers to her frustration with the glorification of patriotic sentiment: “Virginia Woolf, reviewing the finished painting when it was exhibited in London described the poignancy of th[e] exaggerated step as ‘the final scratch of the current concerns, is on view as well in World War I and American Art,” “mark[ing] the one hundred anniversary of World War I […] and providing the most comprehensive exhibition on the relationship of American art to the war” (Brigham 7). “[S]eek[ing] a new language and imagery in order to describe it,” this melding of memory and cultural history includes divisions and tensions that “can be seen in the way artists supported or protested the war effort” as Robert Cozzolino, Anne Classen Knutson and David M. Lubin observe in their Introduction to the scholarly companion volume, World War I and American Art (11, 13). Of the 175 works that were on exhibit in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia was one that had been of special interest to Virginia Woolf: Gassed by John Singer Sargent (see Fig. 1, page 2). Like Henry James, Sargent was an American expatriate living in England, but unlike James, he was “politically neutral,” only accepting the entreaties of Lord Beaverbrook “to serve his adopted homeland as a war artist” in 1918 and after the U.S. entry into the war (Lubin, “Lies” 35).

Commemorating the anniversary of the Great War and its representations by Virginia Woolf and her friends and colleagues in Bloomsbury and beyond, this special issue seeks not so much to retrace ways of understanding them. The contributors to this issue have looked at the topic from Anglo-American vantages, with the end result that appreciation of Woolf and her contemporaries in and out of Bloomsbury becomes more textured and our understanding more detailed and finely tuned.

This sense of the Great War and its representations, seen across genres and nationalities and in light of
In his Grand Illusions: American Art and the First World War, Lubin offers a fuller accounting of Woolf’s reactions: “Virginia Woolf, no friend of militarism in any form, saw it on exhibition […] and believed that it ‘pricked some nerve of protest, or perhaps of humanity,’ in those who stood before it. She admired it for the pain it can provoke” (160)—but Lubin doesn’t see all that there is to see. In fact, her response was even more nuanced and less predictable than we (or Lubin) might suppose. Noting the “benignant influence of the canvas,” Woolf wondered at her inability to understand why “sometimes the magic fails to work”: “The point of a good Academy picture is that you can search the canvas for ten minutes or so and still be doubtful whether you have extracted the whole meaning” (“The Royal Academy” 92, 91). On the whole, she explained in a letter she wrote to Vanessa after seeing the exhibition, although she found the place “amusing and spirited,” she needed more time and fewer crowds in order “to get a clear view of a picture” (Letters [L] 2 378).

However, by the end her review of visitors and paintings, the appeal to “Englishness” becomes something more, and, as she describes Gassed, the tone changes:

But Mr. Sargent was the last straw. Suddenly the great rooms rang like a parrot-house with the intolerable vociferations of gaudy and brainless birds.[…] Honour, patriotism, chastity, wealth, success, importance, position, power—their cries rang and echoed from all quarters. “Anywhere, anywhere, out of this world!” was the only exclamation with which one could stave off the brazen din as one fled[.] (“The Royal Academy” 93)

Coming as it did during a time so replete with forced patriotism and celebration (“every the servants are cynical,” she wrote her sister [L2 377]), Roger Fry is evoked as an arbiter of aesthetic valuation and “proper results”: “No doubt the reaction was excessive; and I must leave it to Mr Roger Fry to decide whether the emotions here recorded are the proper results of one thousand six hundred and seventy-four works of art” (“The Royal Academy” 93). We can only imagine that, however much Fry, like Woolf, detested the war, he may have looked more closely at the blindness and the raised leg depicted in the painting (the ostensible focus of Woolf’s critique) and seen, as Lubin does, that Sargent’s painting, “by looking so closely at blindness, at the impossibility of seeing everything[…] transcends patriotic cant and sentimental pity” (Lubin, “Lies” 37). Lubin, like Fry and like Woolf, understands that “works of art […] produced in the crucible of war, that great generator of falsehood, occupy the chasm” (41). Holland Cotter in his review of the current exhibition observes that because the U.S. was only engaged in the war for a short time (6 April 1917-11 November 1918), many Americans “play down the war, but shouldn’t. Although politicians at the time spun the conflict—which the public increasingly understood to be a murderous mistake—as the war that would end all wars, it did the opposite” (Cotter 1).4

Today, simultaneously confronted with oppositions of our own, the everyday appearance of “fake news” and “alternative facts” (terms being integrated, sans quotations marks, into the vernacular and newspaper articles’), we do well to return to our understanding of Woolf, Bloomsbury and the Great War with a fresh eye, much as contemporary journalism does in evaluating the truth through the lens of New York Times’ slogan “All the News That’s Fit to Print,” or, more recently, the banner of the Washington Post: “Democracy Dies in Darkness.” Untinged by the shadow of contemporary short-sightedness or historical fabrication, we may even look in places we would not expect, as do the four contributors to this special issue. Responding with admirable

4 According to Andrew MacNeillie, it is not known if Fry ever went to the exhibition Woolf’s article describes or spoke to her about her emotional reaction to it as “the R[oyal] A[cademy] was certainly not a favourite haunt of his” (93 n14). In all events, Fry must have been aware that Sargent accepted a commission as a war artist in 1918, while Fry himself had sought one and been turned down.

5 Here, of course, Cotter alludes to H. G. Wells’ The War that Will End War, as I do in the title of this special issue.

ingenuity, insight, and restraint to the call for papers, each of their astute, well-informed treatments of “Virginia Woolf, Bloomsbury, and the War to End War” offers additional light to the darkness.

In the first essay, “Bloomsbury Connections and the First World War,” Hilary Newman presents an intriguing exposition of Right Against Might: The Great War of 1914 by Bella Sidney Woolf and Peace at Once by Clive Bell, which not only suggests the relation of the pamphlets in unnoticed ways, but also their probable influence on Virginia Woolf.

In the second historical treatment of Bloomsbury, Anthea Arnold in “March, April 1918” focuses on another barely mentioned episode during the Great War, specifically the “International Financial Mission” wherein John Maynard Keynes led a group to Paris during an air raid to purchase art works for the National Gallery. Beyond describing all the drama that involved, including their return to England (and their Bloomsbury friends), also during an air raid, and subsequently displaying their purchases, “the new Delacroix & then the Cezanne,” Arnold also suggests that these works serve as the beginning of Keynes’ art collection, and, interestingly, Virginia Woolf’s understanding of the “very mysterious quality of potation” in Cezanne’s painting of apples.

In her essay on “The Great War and Patriotism: Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, and ‘Intolerable Unanimity,’” Mary Jean Corbett shows how, while these two contemporaries shared an apprehension of what Leonard Woolf called “the herd instinct” and what Woolf would call an “intolerable unanimity,” their shared opposition to the war also reveals an apprehension of “new technology” (like the gramophone) that “prepared the ground for war.”

Finally, Mark David Kaufman’s “Woolf and Whistleblowing: From World War I to WikiLeaks” suggests that Woolf’s advocacy of “a certain amount of pushback, controlled leakage, even mutiny, in order to keep the ship of democracy afloat,” has its roots in the Great War, “a conflict that Woolf believed was born of misplaced loyalties.”

Taken together, these essays remind us that the light of the past should extend into the present—and the future.

Karen Levenback
Franciscan Monastery, Washington, DC

Works Cited


Many thanks to the International Virginia Woolf Society for its generous and continuing support of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany.

Be sure to follow Paula Maggio’s Blogging Woolf for up-to-date information about all things Woolfian including information about upcoming Woolf conferences and recent publications from Cecil Woolf Publishers.

bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com
If you need access to a specific article that is not available online at this point, please contact Vara Neverow at neverovv1@southernct.edu.

All issues to the present as well as those from 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 ProQuest Literature Online (LION) and Gale Group/Cengage.

**THE IVWS & VWS ARCHIVE INFORMATION**

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.vicu.utoronto.ca/special/F51ivwoolfocietyfonds.html](http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/special/F51ivwoolfocietyfonds.html)

[http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/f51_int_vwoolf_society.html](http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/f51_int_vwoolf_society.html)

(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 llevenback@att.net or by surface mail:

Karen Levenback, Archival Liaison/IVWS Archive, 304 Philadelphia Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912.

**Woolf and the World of Books University of Reading**

https://woolf2017.com


2017 marks the centenary of the founding of the Hogarth Press. The conference aims to celebrate Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press as a key intervention in modernist and women’s writing and to mark its importance to independent publishing and bookselling.

**Call for Papers:**

Virginia Woolf and the World of Books’ invites you to consider the past, present and future of Virginia Woolf’s works. Attendees are invited to submit papers relating to all aspects of the Woolfs, the world of books, and print cultures, including topics related to Leonard and Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press; the production, reception and distribution of Woolf’s works; editing, revision and translation; periodicals and book publishing; Woolf and her readers; global and planetary modernisms; Bloomsbury and its networks; Hogarth Press authors and illustrators; modernist publishing houses and publishers; Woolf and the Digital Humanities.

Submissions for 20 min papers and/or 3-speaker panel proposals are due February 1st 2017 to vwoolf2017@gmail.com. Panel proposals should include all 3 abstracts and individual speakers’ details and bios. Individual abstracts should be between 200-250 words. Please include a cover page with brief biography, affiliation, and contact details including email.

**Organizing Committee:**

Dr Nicola Wilson (Reading); Dr Bethany Layne (Reading); Dr Maddi Davies (Reading); Dr Claire Battershill (Simon Fraser University); Dr Alice Staveley (Stanford); Dr Helen Southworth (Oregon); Dr Elizabeth Willson Gordon (King’s College, Edmundon); Dr Vara Neverow (Southern Connecticut State University).

Please direct any queries to vwoolf2017@gmail.com
How to Join
The International Virginia Woolf Society
<http://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS>

To join, update membership or donate to the International Virginia Woolf Society, you can use the PayPal feature available online at the IVWS website at http://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS/how-to-join.htm (you can also download the membership form from the IVWS website and mail to the surface address provided).

Regular 12-month membership:
$35
Student or part-time employed 12-month membership:
$15
Regular five year membership:
$130
Retiree five year membership:
$60

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 Conferences on Woolf and MLA calls for papers as well as access to electronic balloting, and electronic versions of newsletters.

The IVWS is now registered as a U.S. non-profit organization. U.S. members’ dues and donations are tax-deductible.

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
(All these charges are for events marked with an asterisk.)
Subscriptions for the year ending 31 December 2017 are £18 UK, £23 Europe and £26 outside of Europe;
Five-year memberships (five years for the price of four) beginning in 2017 are £72 UK, £92 Europe and £104 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 <Stuart.N.Clarke@btinternet.com>

Virginia Woolf and Social Justice
29th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf

Mount St. Joseph University, Cincinnati, Ohio
June 6-9, 2019
Société d’Études Woolfiennes

The Société d’Études Woolfennes (SEW) is a French society which promotes the study of Virginia Woolf, the Bloomsbury Group and Modernism. It was founded in 1996 to develop Woolf studies in France and to create further links between French specialists and their counterparts abroad. It welcomes academics and students in the field of English and Comparative Literature who share a strong interest in the different aspects of Virginia Woolf’s work (the canonical as well as the lesser known works).

Over the years, the SEW has aimed to create a rich working atmosphere that is both warm and generous to all involved, intellectually vibrant and challenging. We are keen to maintain this complementary association of academic poise and spontaneous enthusiasm, so that members, potential members and passing guests all feel welcome and valued.

The dedication of its founding members and more recent participants has enabled the SEW to make its mark in French academic circles, convening high quality international conferences every two years and publishing a selection of the proceedings in peer-reviewed journals, as well as organising more informal annual gatherings and workshops.

Since the foundation of the SEW in 1996, international conferences have focused on:

- “Métamorphose et récit dans l’œuvre de Woolf” (1997)
- “Metamorphosis and narrative in Woolf’s works”
- “Things in Woolf’s works” (1999)
- “Le pur et l’impur” (2001)
- “The pure and the impure”
- “Conversation in Woolf’s works” (2003)
- “Woolf lectrice / Woolf critique” (2006 / 2008)
- “Woolf as a reader / Woolf as a critic”
- “Contemporary Woolf” (2010)
- “Woolf among the Philosophers” (2012)
- “Outlanding Woolf” (2013)
- “Translating Woolf” (2015)

Information concerning past and forthcoming conferences and publications is available on our website: http://etudes-woolfiennes.org.

We would be very pleased to welcome new members. If you wish to join the SEW, please fill in the membership form available on our website (“adhérents”) or send an email to claire.davison@univ-paris3.fr and marie.laniel@gmail.com, indicating your profession, address and research interests.

The annual subscription is 25€ (15€ for students).

Virginia Woolf Miscellany

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

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

The Miscellany considers work that has been previously published elsewhere; however, the editor(s) and guest editor(s) must be notified at the time of submission that a similar or closely related work was published originally elsewhere. The prior publication must also be explicitly cited in the newly published submission. Any permissions to republish must be provided by the author.

CFPs

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

Miscellaneous Submissions

Even when individual issues are themed, the Miscellany accepts submissions unrelated to the theme. Such submissions should be sent to the Managing Editor, Vara Neverow (rather than to the Guest Editor) at: neverowv1@southernct.edu.

Guidelines for Submissions

Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words at maximum and shorter articles are strongly preferred. Articles should be submitted electronically, in .doc or .docx MS Word format and in compliance with the style of the 6th edition of the MLA Handbook (neither the 7th edition published in 2009 or the 8th edition published in 2016). For a copy of the current Miscellany style guide, please contact Vara Neverow at neverowv1@southernct.edu. Editorial note: While previously published work may be submitted for consideration, the original publication must be acknowledged at the time of submission (see above).

Editing Policies

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

Permissions

Contributors are responsible for obtaining permissions related to copyrights and reproductions of materials. Contributors must provide the Editorial Board with original written documentation authorizing the publication of the materials.

Reimbursement for Permissions

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

Publication Policies

Submissions accepted for publication may be published in both print format and electronic format.

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

Rights of Publication

The Miscellany retains all rights for future uses of work published herein. The contributor may, with the express permission of the Miscellany, use the work in other contexts. The contributor may not, however, sell the subsidiary rights of any work she or he has published in the Miscellany. If the contributor is granted permission and does use the material elsewhere, the contributor must acknowledge prior publication in the Miscellany.
A Brief Overview of Resources for Woolfians

The Virginia Woolf Miscellany is an independent publication, which has been sponsored 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 [https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com](https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com). A number of earlier issues from Fall 1973, Issue 1 to Fall 2002, Issue 61 are also available on this site. For access to an issue that has not yet been posted, please contact Vara Neverow at neverowv1@southernct.edu.

The IVWS was founded in 1973 as the Virginia Woolf Society. The society has a direct relationship with the Modern Language Association and has for many years 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://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS/](http://sites.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 VWListserv is hosted by the University of Ohio. The current list administrator is Elisa Kay Sparks. Anne Fernald oversaw the list for many years. The founder of the list is Morris Beja. To join the list, you need to send a message to the following address: listproc@lists.ohio-state.edu. In the body of the email, you must write: subscribe VWL 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.ohio-state.edu. In the body of the email, write: unsubscribe VWL.

Materials from most of the sources mentioned above are included in the IVWS/VWS archive at the E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University, 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 klenback@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 whussey@pace.edu. Each annual conference is organized by one or more individuals associated with the host institution. The host institution finances the event and uses the registration fees of attendees to offset the costs of the event. The Annual Conference has no formal association with the International Virginia Woolf Society or the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain or any other Woolf society.

The Selected Papers from the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf 2001-2013 (excluding 2004) were published by Clemson University Press (formerly Clemson University Digital Press) under the auspices of Wayne Chapman. Liverpool University Press now oversees the publication of the essays from the conference that are selected. The editors of the volumes vary from year to year. The electronic version of the Selected Works published by Clemson are available in downloadable PDF format online at [http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cudp_woolf](http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cudp_woolf). Selected Works from the 2002 and 2004 Woolf conferences are available to view at the Woolf Center at Southern Connecticut State University: [http://woolf-center.southernct.edu](http://woolf-center.southernct.edu).

The Selected Papers from 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 at [http://www.pace.edu/press/](http://www.pace.edu/press/).
CALLS FOR PAPERS FOR SPECIAL TOPICS IN FUTURE ISSUES OF
THE VIRGINIA WOOLF MISCELLANY

CFP: Virginia Woolf Miscellany
Issue #92, Fall 2017
Special Topic: Virginia Woolf and Indigenous Literatures
Submissions Due: 31 July 2017 (date extended)

Editor: Kristin Czarnecki

This issue of VWM seeks essays that consider Woolf’s oeuvre in dialogue with works by Native American, First Nations, Australian, and New Zealander authors, among others. What kind of dialogic emerges when placing Woolf’s writings alongside those of indigenous writers? How might indigenous literatures enhance interpretations of Woolf’s modernist, feminist, and pacifist poetics? How might such comparisons affect or inform understandings of subjectivity in women’s lives and literature, and the interconnections between narrative innovation and socio-political activism? Does Woolf’s ecological vision align with those of indigenous writers responding to threats of global destruction and mass extinctions? Could such comparative and intersectional work chip away at the boundaries still often imposed upon literary studies—the “West” versus the “Rest”? Other approaches are welcome.

Please send submissions of no more than 2500 words, including notes and works cited, in the latest version of Word by 31 July 2017 to: Kristin Czarnecki at kristin_czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu

CFP: Virginia Woolf Miscellany
Issue #93, Spring/Summer 2018
Special Topic: Virginia Woolf and Biofiction
Submissions Due: 15 August 2017

Guest Editors: Todd Avery and Michael Lackey

Biofiction, literature that names its protagonist after an actual historical figure, has become a dominant literary form in recent years. Margaret Atwood, J.M. Coetzee, Joyce Carol Oates, Colum McCann, Colm Tóibín, Peter Carey, and Hilary Mantel are just a few luminaries who have authored spectacular biographical novels and won major awards, including the Pulitzer Prize, the Man Booker Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Pen/Faulkner Award, and the National Book Award. With regard to the rise and legitimization of biofiction, Michael Cunningham’s The Hours is a crucial text not just because it won the Pulitzer Prize in fiction but also because it features Virginia Woolf as a character. Since the publication of The Hours in 1998, there have been numerous biographical novels about Woolf, including Gillian Freeman’s But Nobody Lives in Bloomsbury (2006), Susan Sellers’ Vanessa and Virginia (2009), Priya Parmar’s Vanessa and her Sister (2015), Norah Vincent’s Adeline (2015), and Maggie Gee’s Virginia Woolf in Manhattan (2015). While there have been multiple novels about other historical figures, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Dickinson, Nat Turner, Eliza Lynch, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry James, and Katherine Mansfield, it appears that Woolf has inspired the most and some of the best biographical novels.

This is ironic, because while Woolf is known for bending and blending genres, she was never able to imagine her way to the biographical novel—she certainly came close in Orlando, which is not a biographical novel because she does not name the protagonist Vita, and Flush, which fits the definition of a classical historical novel rather than a biographical novel. However, Woolf’s theoretical approach to imaginative biography (voiced especially in her essays “The New Biography” [1927] and “The Art of Biography” [1939], prompted by Harold Nicolson’s and Lytton Strachey’s contemporary biographical productions), encouraged writers to push the Victorian limits of the genre and explore new (“odd”) possibilities. Her discussions on the new directions and liberties that biography took at the beginning of the twentieth century has certainly paved the way for the current postmodernist literary genre of biofiction.

The Virginia Woolf Miscellany seeks submissions about Woolf, Bloomsbury, and biofiction. Questions to consider include: To what degree has Woolf’s work inspired aesthetic developments that led to the rise and legitimization of contemporary biofiction? What in Woolf’s life makes her particularly suited as a protagonist of biofiction? How does contemporary biofiction give us new access to Woolf, her family
and friends, and Bloomsbury? How do contemporary biofictions challenge and reimagine traditional ways of thinking about Woolf’s life and works? How is Woolf’s work and life used in biofiction to advance ways of thinking that even Woolf could not have imagined? Is it ethical to use Woolf’s life in a contemporary novel? Can an author simply make things up about an actual historical figure such as Woolf? And is it ethical for an author to alter facts about a person’s life in order to communicate what is considered a more important “truth”? These are just a few questions the rise of biofictions about Woolf raise. Please feel free to generate and answer your own set of questions.

Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words. Send inquiries and submissions to Michael Lackey lacke010@morris.umn.edu or Todd Avery Todd_Avery@uml.edu by 15 AUGUST 2017.

CFP: Virginia Woolf Miscellany Issue #94, Fall 2018

Special Topic: Almost a Century: Reading Jacob’s Room

Submissions Due: 1 March 2018

Guest Editor: Alexandra DeLuise

This issue of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany invites contributions focused on aspects of Jacob’s Room. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to: modernism and the structural form of the novel; the critical reception of the novel; Woolf’s elusive narrator; themes of loss and absence; the use of gaps or omission to say what cannot be written in print; nature and the outdoors; the portrayal of Greece in this by the Bloomsbury Group; sexuality (explicit or otherwise); and commentary on the Great War. Papers which consider Jacob’s Room in comparison to other novels by Woolf or her contemporaries are especially welcome. Please send enquiries and submissions no longer than 2500 words by 1 March 2018 to: Alexandra DeLuise at a.deluise@aol.com.

If you are interested in proposing a special topic for a future issue of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, please contact Vara Neverow at neverowvl@southernct.edu

The International Virginia Woolf Society announces the Fourth Annual Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay Prize

The International Virginia Woolf Society is pleased to host the third annual undergraduate essay competition in honor of Virginia Woolf and in memory of Angelica Garnett, writer, artist, and daughter of Woolf’s sister, Vanessa Bell. For this competition, essays can be on any topic pertaining to the writings of Virginia Woolf. Essays should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words in length, including notes and works cited, with an original title of the entrant’s choosing. Essays will be judged by the officers of the International Virginia Woolf Society: Kristin Czarnecki, President; Ann Martin, Vice-President; Alice Keane, Secretary-Treasurer; and Drew Shannon, Historian-Bibliographer. The winner will receive $200 and have the essay published in the subsequent issue of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany.

Please send essays in the latest version of Word. All entries must be received by June 4th 2018. To receive an entry form, please contact Kristin Czarnecki at kristin_czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu.

The Paper by the Winner of the 2016 Essay Prize appeared in the combined Issues 89 and 90.

The Paper by the Winner of the 2018 Essay Prize will appear in Issue 92.

The Paper by the Winner of the 2015 Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay Prize

Recipient of the First International Virginia Woolf Society Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Prize Essay

Halyna Chumak

ENG392H: Individual Studies
Course directed by Melba Cuddy-Keane
University of Toronto

“Some Fragment of What Privately She Called Reality”: Reality, Words, and Alternative Modes of Communication in Virginia Woolf’s Night and Day

Describing her personal troubles with, yet the need for, communication, Mary Datchet, of Virginia Woolf’s 1919 novel Night and Day, proclaims, “I find talking so difficult; but loneliness frightens me” (ND 289). Communication—through speech, or as mediated by ink and paper—is cumbersome, and as Mary highlights, “difficult.” One problem threatening effective communication is the existence of multiple realities, where ‘reality’ signifies something different for each person, thereby limiting the extent to which individuals understand one another’s thoughts and experiences. Moreover, even if the impossibility of absolute understanding is not accepted, successful expression is obstructed by the essentially human inability to fasten words to every thought or feeling, and further compounded by one’s frequent failure to utter, much less
confidently articulate, the words he or she does have. Despite the firmest conviction that “Communication is health […] and happiness” (CE3 24), as Woolf declares in her essay “Montaigne,” we struggle in sharing our private selves and idiiosyncratic experiences of life.

The persistent strain and doubt underlying communication are facets of experience that Woolf is deeply interested in, exploring exchanges between writer and reader, speaker and listener, in her essays and novels. Exclusively considering Night and Day, I will investigate Woolf’s interpretation of ‘reality’ and her proposition of alternative modes of expression that might prove capable of transferring meaning between individuals when language proves insufficient. This analysis will demonstrate that Woolf’s understanding of communication is finely tethered to problems of mind and interiority and the human desire for an absolute knowledge of another. I contend that Woolf exposes the impossibility of attaining absolute understanding—both of another person, and between individuals—even with alternative means of communication that reveal what words cannot. Acknowledging that one’s communion with others is fundamentally limited, she nevertheless approaches this communicative conundrum from an optimistic perspective, insinuating that the inherent separation between individuals does not deny the possibility of a felt intimacy or happiness.

In Night and Day, her second novel that is often cast aside and regarded as an outlier in her complete literary corpus, Woolf reveals her interest in problems posed by language, mind, and reality, concepts that she revisits and reconsider. Writing on the problem of other minds in To the Lighthouse, Martha Nussbaum underscores Woolf’s emphasis on “the tremendous gap between what we are in and to ourselves, and the part of the self that enters the interpersonal world” (732)—an idea that reverberates through Night and Day. Criticism on this novel, however, has not been favorable to Woolf, ignoring these latent ideas and affixing a particularly disparaging label onto the text: “oddly traditional” (Hussey 189). Katherine Mansfield marked Night and Day as “Miss Austen up-to-date,” and E. M. Forster considered it “a strictly formal and classical work” (both qtd. in Hussey 189). Recent criticism has been more accepting; yet, attention has been primarily devoted to Woolf’s representation of women and heterosexual relationships (Hussey 190-91). Although Jean O. Love appropriately identified the novel as “[one] about knowledge, even epistemology,” she still cited it “a failure,” arguing it unable to “elicit the reader’s involvement” with “questions having both general philosophical implication and personal meaning for the characters” (109). I, by contrast, propose that Night and Day is ‘a novel about knowledge’, capable of engaging the reader with ‘philosophical implications’; it is not a ‘failure’, as Love claimed. Furthermore, a revaluation of Night and Day on these terms can fundamentally supplement studies of Woolf’s complete body of work, promoting a more nuanced understanding of her evolution as “a writer about to revolutionize the form of the English novel” (Hussey 189).

Exploring the intersection of mind and communication in Night and Day, Woolf depicts the mind as divided: there exists a figurative ‘day’ mind that facilitates individuals’ “active” attempts to interact with others in “the life of society” in “broad daylight,” as well as a figurative ‘night’ mind—“contemplative and dark”—which aligns itself with “the life of solitude” (ND 356), or aloneness. The novel, like its protagonist, Katharine Hilbery, asks: “Is it not possible to step from one to the other, erect, and without essential change?” (356). Woolf’s characters represent this dilemma, finding it difficult to share their respective understandings of the separation between the ‘day’ mind that stimulates their “launched upon sentences” (4) or reliance upon a “stock of commonplace[s] … laid in on purpose to fill silences with” (223)—thereby facilitating their navigation through a social world populated with other beings—and the exceptionally personal ‘night’ mind that compels them to “lap[s] into the depths of thought” (438) in silence, and typically, loneliness. Developing these oppositional states of mind, Woolf gestures towards the co-existence of multiple subjective realities and the strain of conveying one’s experience to another, when ‘reality’ means something different for each person. Acknowledging that the separation between minds renders perfect communication and absolute knowledge of another impossible, she advances that brief moments of genuine understanding might be possible—only to qualify this with the notion that one cannot be absolutely certain that the most limited understanding was ever achieved, even if a sense of understanding was felt.

The faithful representation of reality was a contentious topic amongst Woolf’s forerunners and contemporaries. As Melba Cuddy-Keane, Adam Hammond, and Alexandra Peat argue in Modernism: Keywords, many writers like Henry James, H.D., and Wallace Stevens “believed that there were many realities, and that these overlapped and were irremovable to any single essence,” advocating for “the embrace of reality in all its contradictions” (Cuddy-Keane, Hammond and Peat 197). Yet, there were still disputes regarding how one could best capture reality’s “many-sidedness,” which typically divided writers into “two opposing camps: those arguing for an external, objective approach […] and those arguing for an internal, subjective approach” (197). Woolf may seem a proponent of the ‘subjective camp’ alone, proposing in “Modern Fiction” that modern writers should represent “life” by revealing the workings of “an ordinary mind on an ordinary day” (CE 2 106) and exploring “the dark places of psychology” (108); however, Night and Day can be read as her attempt to “combine internal and external approaches” (Cuddy-Keane, Hammond, and Peat 200), by probing the implications of an intersubjective space.

In the novel, Katharine’s cousin, Cassandra Otway, describes reality as a “gift” (ND 364) that “each other person possess[es]” (363), but can “impart if you as[k] them for it” (364). Attending a dinner, Cassandra acknowledges that “little Mr. Peyton on her right and William Rodney on her left” were both “endowed with the quality which seemed to her so unmistakable and so precious that the way people neglected to demand it was a constant source of surprise to her” (364). Cassandra characterizes reality as contained within individuals and desirable enough to merit ‘demand,’ insinuating that she is able to appreciate and ‘demand’ another’s reality, while coloring those who do not ‘ask for’ it as neglected. She might be naïve in suggesting that the central problem with the sharing of reality is one’s failure to ask; however, Woolf manipulates this episode to imply that communication is only one barrier impeding this sharing. Cassandra is ultimately unable to explain what reality is or what she means, beyond pinning it as a ‘quality’ or ‘gift’ to be shared. Just before Katharine’s cousin studies the two men, the narrator notes that “each person possessed in Cassandra’s mind some fragment of what privately she called ‘reality’” (363-64; emphasis added), highlighting that Cassandra’s ambiguous conception of reality is her own, rather than a definition constructed by multiple individuals. Woolf’s scare quotes, enveloping the word ‘reality,’ emphasize the indefiniteness of the term, suggesting that others might disagree with Cassandra’s personal definition or that ‘reality’ might not be the correct word for the ‘quality’ she seeks to illuminate. Moreover, if the ‘quality’ is only ‘some fragment’ of her conception of reality, there are still more components shaping the concept that Woolf’s readers are not privy to. These components are withheld from readers, just as Cassandra keeps her notion of reality ‘private,’ in her thoughts. This moment configures reality as precious subjective experience that should be pulled into and shared in a social, communicative, and effectively intersubjective space, while accentuating problems that complicate this scheme: individuals might fail to ask for others’ realities, those asking might have a different understanding of what is being asked than those potentially answering, and those potentially answering might not communicate any or all of their thoughts. Night and Day suggests that individuals, by not asking or fully answering, hold onto the privacy that arises from the essential separateness between minds.

Indeed, Woolf insinuates that the difficulty of communicating one’s reality, or thoughts, stems from the individual, as opposed to “the
inadequacy of words” (513) alone. The words Katharine Hilbery has occasionally “di[e] on her lips” (496), and Ralph’s tone “almost refuse[s] to articulate” (514). The characters have seemingly grasped the words they wish to release, but their organs physically prevent them from producing intelligible statements. Language becomes confined within individuals, as opposed to playing a communicative role and enabling a meaningful exchange of realities.

Although Night and Day advances that “any intercourse between people is extremely partial” (205), because “human beings are woefully ill-adapted for communication” (512), Woolf is more interested in how beings attempt to communicate despite this weakness. She poses that the manner in which words are relayed can reveal more about the communicator and the communicator’s intended meaning than the words themselves. Speaking with Katharine, Mary Datchet detects “signs of a soft brooding spirit, of a sensibility unblunted and profound, playing over her thoughts and deeds,” “not in [Katharine’s] words, perhaps, but in her voice, in her face, in her attitude” (283). Katharine’s ‘voice,’ ‘face,’ and ‘attitude’ become conduits of expression, communicating something her language fails to capture; however, Mary’s ‘perhaps’ suggests that she is uncertain of the specific elements in Katharine’s speech that expose her ‘spirit’ and ‘sensibility.’ She gestures to ‘voice,’ ‘face,’ and ‘attitude’ as possible sites of expression, but insinuates that something more ambiguous in Katharine’s articulation offers a glimpse of her mind. Further into their conversation, Mary momentarily finds Katharine’s words “shallow, supercilious, cold-blooded and cynical,” with “all her natural instincts […] roused in revolt against them,” yet “[cannot] help feeling the simplicity and good faith that lay behind [them]” (285) shortly after. Mary’s reaction underscores the tension between the effect of the words selected and spoken, and the effect of how those words are voiced. Katharine’s language is overshadowed by a mysterious, non-linguistic communicative element that Mary feels to be more indicative of Katharine’s thoughts.

William Rodney’s delivery of his paper on literature at the discussion night Mary hosts similarly exemplifies that unintentional mannerisms lingering behind language are capable of transmitting meaning. Although William’s essay is poorly written and pitifully articulated, it succeeds in “stir[ring] his audience to a degree of animation quite remarkable in [such] gatherings” (50); it stimulates discussion. The narrator, moreover, cannot identify if the audience is stirred by William’s intended message or “by the contortions which a human being was going through for their benefit” (50), but highlights that “through his manner and his confusion of language there had emerged some passion of feeling” that “formed in the majority […] a little picture or an idea which each now was eager to give expression to” (51). William’s ‘contortions,’ ‘manner,’ and ‘confusion of language’ engender the ‘idea’ that promotes response and dialogue between individuals, rather than his words. Mary’s declaration—“When a paper’s a failure, nobody says anything” (53)—bolsters the notion that unstructured, dynamic, and reciprocating communication between individuals is more important and meaningful than a perfectly delivered and indisputably understood statement that demands no further remarks, questions, or challenges.

Like William’s contorted gestures, involuntary and instinctive laughter is also positioned as an alternative communicative mode in Woolf’s text. At the music hall, William “startle[d]” by Katharine “leaning forward and clapping her hands with […] abandonment” (481). He recounts how “her laugh rang out with the laughter of the audience,” and recognizes that it “disclosed something that he had never suspected in her” (481). Katharine’s laughter, which sounds with the laughter of others, enables her engagement with the audience and reveals ‘something’ she might otherwise be unwilling or unable to express through language. The word ‘disclosed’ suggests that Katharine’s cracking composure permits William to witness something she had previously withheld and kept private. By contrast, when William sees Cassandra, “not laughing, too deeply intent and surprised to laugh at what she saw,” he “watche[s] her as if she were a child” (481). Focusing ‘too deeply’ on her own experience and ‘not laughing,’ Cassandra distances herself from others, becoming an inaccessible object of spectatorship, rather than a participant in interaction.

Woolf’s representation of these interactions in Night and Day intimates that alternative forms of communication—tone of voice, mannerisms and gestures, and laughter, among many others embedded in the text—are capable of conveying, or suggesting, another’s ‘reality.’ While Katharine’s “broken statement” at the end of the novel prompts Ralph to “feel that he had stepped […] into […] [her] mind,” Woolf challenges such an experience by stressing that it was only ‘felt.’ Ralph may have completely misunderstood Katharine’s statement. Yet, his interpretation pleases him, as he becomes “charged with extreme excitement” (531). Analogously, William’s audience might not have eagerly responded to the exact idea he intended to communicate, but the interactive, communal space that his talk promoted is still cast as positive. Contrary to Love’s assertion, Night and Day inspires its readers to reflect upon many implications—of being an individual, the ‘many-sidedness’ of reality, the limitations of communication. How do we continue to interact without the certainty of understanding? How do we know that we have not created “a story […] in [our] mind[s] about another person, […] know[ing] all the time it isn’t true” (263)? One possible solution that Woolf subtly offers through Mrs. Hilbery is that we “have faith in our vision” (510). Certainty and absolute knowledge of another are very likely impossible, but ‘faith’ in the probability of some understanding might foster a feeling of closeness, and in effect, ‘extreme excitement’—or, the ‘happiness’ that Woolf later alludes to in “Montaigne.”

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In Memoriam

JEAN KENNARD (1936-2016): A REMEMBRANCE

Jean Kennard is likely best known for her book *Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby: A Working Partnership*, which remains, to my knowledge, the only book devoted equally to both Brittain and Holtby. She was also the author of the books *Number and Nightmare: Forms of Fantasy in Contemporary Fiction* (1975) and * Victims of Convention* (1978), as well as essays on a wide variety of subjects from John Barth to lesbian reading to Barbara Pym. She was professor emerita of English at the University of New Hampshire, where she was the first person to teach a course on women’s literature, the first woman to chair the English Department, the first female full professor in the department, and co-teacher of the first course on gay and lesbian texts.

As a child, she lived through the Blitz in London. She received a B.A. from the University of London in 1958, moved to Canada in 1960, and in 1968 completed her Ph.D. in English at the University of California Berkeley. She taught at California State University Hayward until 1975, when she moved to the University of New Hampshire, where she won multiple awards for her teaching and scholarship, retiring in 2000. She died March 26, 2016 in Laconia, NH of pneumonia, with her life partner of 39 years, Susan Schibanoff, at her side.

It is as a Woolfian that I will always remember Jean Kennard, however, and not only because of her essays on Woolf for the *Journal of Modern Literature* and *Woolf Studies Annual*, but because of an undergraduate course she taught toward the end of her career, when I was an unsettled kid and Woolf was a new passion for me.

I took Prof. Kennard’s seminar on Woolf in the spring of 1998, when I was finishing my senior year at UNH, having transferred there only one term earlier from New York University (it’s a long story, mostly involving money and my parents’ divorce). The previous summer, I had volunteered at the wool conference that Jeanne Dubino organized in my hometown at Plymouth State College. Having had such a wonderful experience there—I felt welcomed by the Woolf community at a difficult moment of my life in a way I’ve never forgotten—I eagerly signed up for Prof. Kennard’s seminar. It proved to be both one of the most challenging and rewarding courses I ever took, undergrad or grad.

We read all of the novels except *Night and Day*, plus *A Room of One’s Own, Three Guineas*, and the essays in Michèle Barrett’s *Women & Writing* anthology. I remember being so exhausted from reading that I could hardly keep up with my other classes, but it was a profoundly fulfilling exhaustion, because reading such a volume of Woolf made her words and images feel like a presence in my life, a sort of companion. My memories of the class sessions are hazy. We sat in little wooden chairs with desks attached, and Prof. Kennard sat at the front beside a desk on which she piled well-loved books. We discussed each reading carefully, starting with questions and confusions, then moving toward whatever seemed worth digging into most fully in the text. I remember wishing my peers would talk less so that we could simply sit and listen to Prof. Kennard speak, both because her insights seemed more interesting than our own, and because her English accent felt so much more appropriate than our own northern New England nasalities.

I was the only male in the course, which perplexed and even angered some of the students, at least one of whom saw me as an interloper, but it only got commented on openly toward the end of the term, when for some reason we were discussing how and why certain writers get seen as “for” certain readers -- why, Prof. Kennard asked, might it be that only one man signed up for the course? We talked about other writers (I remember Alice Walker’s name coming up, and I said I also loved a lot of her work, which just proved to the other students, I suppose, what a gender anomaly I was!) and about how we as readers find our way into different types of texts. Why are we attracted to certain writers and not others? How do our gender expectations affect our reading? How are we situated within our experiences as people and readers? The ideas from that conversation stuck with me and affected a lot of my later academic work. (I wish I had known then that such questions had been at the heart of Jean Kennard’s own work at least since the late 1970s.)

My term paper was, if I remember correctly, on Woolf and pacifism. What I remember vividly is Prof. Kennard’s feedback on the paper: She liked it, but thought perhaps it could use a little bit less history and a little bit more literary analysis. For whatever reason, that feedback led to an epiphany I probably should have had earlier: That literary history and literary analysis are not necessarily the same thing (and that, left on my own, I’ll always veer more toward literary history than analysis).

After the seminar, I didn’t keep in contact with Prof. Kennard, though I did thank her at the end of the course for making Woolf so vivid and accessible in a way that didn’t feel simplifying. Life took me elsewhere, but Woolf remained a constant companion.

And then life brought me back to old haunts. By the time I returned to UNH to work on my doctorate, Jean Kennard was retired, as were most of the faculty I’d known as an undergrad. But Woolf was still with me, and has become a third of my dissertation, which is supervised by Prof. Kennard’s successor, Robin Hackett.

Working on Woolf material a year or so ago, I suddenly needed some secondary sources on Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby. I visited the library and took a book off the shelf: *Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby: A Working Partnership*. It was one of the most pleasant shocks of my life to discover that Jean Kennard was the author of a book that would prove quite useful to me. Soon after, I looked for her other writings, finding yet more overlaps in our interests.

I wish we had had a chance to talk about Brittain and Holtby, about Woolf in the ‘30s, about all sorts of other things that have become obsessions of mine over the years, the seeds of which she helped to plant. Such is the fate of great teachers, though: Their influence may be unsung. The influence remains, though, and matters.

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University of New Hampshire
Georgia Johnston was a gifted scholar, a brilliant teacher, a valued colleague, and a dear friend of many Woolfians. Georgia organized the Eighth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf and Communities. The event was hosted by Saint Louis University in June 1998. Georgia also served as President of the International Virginia Woolf Society from 2009-2011. Those who knew Georgia will always cherish their memories of her and remember her presence, her sense of humor, her profound kindness, her gentleness and her grace. Those who did not know her will appreciate her insightful scholarly work.

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Alex Zwerdling
Professor of English, Emeritus, University of California Berkeley
Age 84
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Virginia Woolf remarked in *A Room of One's Own* that, during the Elizabethan age, it seemed that every other man could turn a song or sonnet (38). Similarly, during the First World War, it seemed that virtually every other person (now no longer limited by gender) could publish a pamphlet on that period. Virginia Woolf had family connections with two such pamphleteers; both Bella Sidney Woolf, Virginia Woolf's sister-in-law, and Clive Bell, Woolf's brother-in-law, produced war pamphlets in the early stages of the war, though they took entirely different attitudes to it. Some of the ideas they tackled overlapped, but Bella Sidney Woolf's were in favor of the war and Clive Bell's were against it. Other aspects of the war Bella and Clive wrote about were particular to each pamphleteer.

The pro-war pamphlet *Right against Might: The Great War of 1914,* by Bella Sidney Woolf (Mrs. R. H. Lock), judged the official reason for the war as perfectly valid, while Clive Bell's anti-war pamphlet, *Peace at Once,* rejected it (the pamphlet was seized by the Lord Mayor of London in 1915). The reason for Bella Sidney Woolf's stance was that Great Britain had pledged itself to protect Belgium against foreign invasion. Bella Sidney Woolf records Germany's conviction that Great Britain would not go to war “[[just for a scrap of paper]]” (7). The phrase crops up throughout her pamphlet, thus acquiring force through repetition, and indeed it is also the title of Chapter III. Bella Sidney Woolf argues that the “scrap of paper” was not just this: “It stood for Honour and Faith and Truth” (7). She adds: “There are certain things men are ready to die for, and one of them is their word of honour” (8). Somewhat emotionally she describes the resistance of Belgium. She increases the persuasiveness of her view by an apt choice of adjectives.

Germany is described as “cruel and savage” (16), while the Belgian army and nation are both called “little” (16, 24). Plainly, it is a David and Goliath situation, and Great Britain must support the small, invaded country. The appalling state of the Belgian refugees is communicated; Bella gives individual anecdotal details of their bravery and heroism. She concludes that Great Britain must help and comfort these refugees, and, after the war, restore them to a “rich and smiling land” (24).

Clive Bell is far more cynical than Bella Sidney Woolf. He flatly refuses to believe the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey's purported reason for pursuing the war, that is, that fighting commenced because “a treaty signed in 1839 should be broken in 1914” (15). Clive Bell insists that many a international treaty between countries has been broken and that war has not therefore been considered necessary. Because he is unable to accept the government view of the reasons for the war, Clive Bell can only conclude that the “indescribable horrors” and possibly irreparable losses that Europe has been undergoing for the past ten months have been “all for—just nothing” (47).

In his pamphlet, Clive Bell frequently addresses another pro-war pamphlet, Professor Gilbert Murray's *How Can War Ever be Right?* (in a footnote Clive Bell says that Murray’s pamphlet presents “the best case for the war I have yet seen” [24]). He answers some of Murray's views, which coincidentally accord with some of Bella Sidney Woolf’s. Like Bella, Clive says Murray believes we are fighting for “National Honour” (18). However, Clive Bell denies this. Clive imagines a young man “going to fight, not because his person or his property, or the person or property of his sweetheart, were in any sort of danger, but because the Cabinet had decided that England ought to fight” (8). Bell explains that the “nation” is an abstraction and that it is simply a collection of individuals. Unlike Murray, Clive Bell believes that individual honour does not demand that a war should be waged because a treaty has been broken. Addressing Murray directly, Clive Bell asks if Murray is arguing that, “men are dying for their outraged feelings?” (27). He offers a direct challenge to Murray: “What can you offer us, Professor Murray, us, the common men, the young men, the men with the world before us, that is worth our lives? [...] [Treaties] are not worth our lives” (28). Clive Bell was being a little disingenuous here: he had no intention of fighting in the trenches whatever happened. Nor was he a “common” man; rather, he belonged to the educated elite from whose ranks the government was drawn.

Bella Sidney Woolf views the war as “[t]he Great Crusade of 1914” (Author’s note). Yet her pamphlet is also a thoughtful and intelligent work. The argument is clearly set out for the reader by a well-informed writer: the first chapter is “Rulers of Countries Involved in the War” and the second “The Steps that Led ‘Right’ to Declare War upon ‘Might.’” Nevertheless, Bella Sidney Woolf has no illusions about the horrors of war: it is “terrible” and “[n]o words can describe the misery and the awfulness of it” (39). Simultaneously, for Bella Sidney Woolf, it is a “great war” because it is “Right against Might” (39).

Bella Sidney Woolf has a clear view of what the war needs to achieve: “We are not seeking for more power, for more land, or for revenge. We only desire to bring peace to Europe for ever, and liberty for each nation, great or small, to dwell securely in her own land” (39). But she qualifies this further: “It can only be a ‘great war’ if it is the end of all wars” (40).

Clive Bell’s attitude in his pamphlet, *Peace at Once* (1915), is the opposite: the war is “murderous folly” and diplomacy should be used instead of force (8). He believes that peace terms should be immediately offered to Germany. Incredibly, as a part of a peace process, Bell is willing to cede away territory which he and Great Britain have no rights to: for example Central Africa, then in colonial hands (43).

Unlike Bella Sidney Woolf, Clive Bell frequently looks beyond the war to gauge its future effects. Obviously those who will pay the most for the war are those who are killed—they have no future—but other ordinary
people will also be affected. Clive Bell argues that they will all be worse off; wages will go down and they will also buy less. He also argues that there will be “less for scientific experiments and social improvements, less for pleasure, less for leisure. Life will become less amusing and less healthy, old age more cheerless, death more masterful. Worst of all, there will be less hope” (13).

It is not known whether Clive read Bella’s pamphlet, but at times it seems to answer hers. Clive Bell certainly rejected Bella Woolf’s conclusion, writing:

> there are a few who still believe that what is to come is “the ending of war.” Kill, suffer, and die they say, that there may be no more armaments and no more wars. They are some of the nicest people in the world, but they are quite incapable of facing facts….We want a peace that will end not war, but this war. (35-36)

It might be suggested that Clive Bell is also unable to face realities, for he argues that it wouldn’t be much different being ruled as “a German province” (21). In this case he anticipates only being irritated by German officials. Otherwise he appears to believe life would carry on much as usual for him: “I should enjoy a liberty to live my own life as I pleased, to read what books I please, see what plays I pleased, think and feel as I believed, and, except about politics, express myself as I pleased. […] Frankly, how much are we expected to suffer rather than suffer a change of masters?” (22). The circumstances he envisions as a province of Germany are far more liberal than they would be likely to be in reality. Soon his ‘rulers’ would probably wish to control his thoughts and what he could read and watch—in short, to impose an ideology on a subject nation. Later on, in Peace at Once, Clive Bell returns to this view, again arguing that most people would rather live under an unsympathetic government “than not live at all” (39).

Bella Sidney Woolf disagrees with this argument, instead describing the “glory” of those sacrificing their lives, as well as their womenfolk who “stand and wait”’ (35). Bella Sidney Woolf provides an idealised vision of the allied troops in the trenches:

> The stories of our men fighting day after day in the trenches, torn by shell, now waist deep in water, now half frozen by the snow undaunted, indomitable, cheerful, joking in the face of death and danger—the story of Mons, of the Aisne, of the Yser—they call with an irresistible call the man from his desk, his books, his fireside, his love. (34)

By contrast, Clive Bell does not idealise the suffering involved in war. Writing somewhat later than Bella, Clive might have been more aware of battlefield conditions. In fact, he praises Murray who, Bell says, ‘has dared […] to face the vision of the battlefield’ (25). Here he quotes a paragraph from Murray’s pamphlet describing the previously unimaginable horrors of the battlefield (Murray 4-5).

Bella Sidney Woolf and Clive Bell also diverge in some of the matters likely to arise from the war. Bella Sidney Woolf devotes several chapters to the brave and disinterested help offered by the Empire, the dominions and the colonies. She promotes a very rosy picture of these nations’ relationships with ‘the Mother Country’ (25). Chapters IV (“All I Possess”) and VI (“The Rally to the Flag”) treat these issues. Based on their growing anti-Imperialist feelings, the Bloomsbury Group would surely have disliked this kind of emotional argument.

Clive Bell only briefly mentions the colonies; he does not refer to the dominions or the British Empire at all. His greatest fear is that the whole of European civilization will break down. He envisages how this might occur in a few devastating sentences:

> A greater and greater part of the productive population of Europe will be swallowed up in armies. Of the remainder a greater and greater part will be occupied entirely in producing munitions. Europe will not be able to support itself by its own labour. It will want the cash and credit to purchase abroad. (50)

Other countries’ productiveness will also be reduced and so eventually Europeans will go hungry. War, famine and pestilence will follow. The people will give up civilization, sickness and die. Clive Bell would favour even an “inconclusive peace” (52); if it leads to another war a decade ahead, there will at least have been a ten-year respite. His final paragraph begins, “My plea is for peace at once” (55).

Clive Bell developed his arguments about art, civilization and war in an article written for the October 1915 issue of the International Journal of Ethics. In this article, “Art and War,” Clive Bell argued that the two aspects, which give a civilization value, are “art and thought” (7). He states: “a war that leaves the world poorer in art and thought is, whatever its political consequences, a victory for barbarism and for humanity a disaster. […] In times of storm and darkness it is the part of artists and philosophers to tend the lamp” (7). Twice he starkly and succinctly writes, “Art survives” (8, 9). Bella Sidney Woolf does not mention art or civilization in the abstract, despite quoting from Milton.

There is another difference between Right Against Might and Peace at Once. Bella Sidney Woolf gives a clear and logical step-by-step exposition of all the events leading up to Great Britain’s declaration of war on 4 August 1914. Bella Sidney Woolf shows a good grasp of public events. She proceeds to set out her arguments in eight wide-ranging chapters. She introduces and finishes whatever material she has in hand in a chapter and does not then return to it.

By contrast there is no logical development in Clive Bell’s Peace at Once. Bell feels his case as strongly as Bella Sidney Woolf feels hers, but he does not present his material nearly as efficiently. He tends to be repetitive; the same issue recurs when the reader thought Clive Bell had fully dealt with it already, so there is a feeling of going round in circles.

Finally what would—or did—Virginia Woolf make of her sister-in-law and brother-in-law’s war pamphlets? Unfortunately we do not know of her reactions to Right Against Might. Virginia Woolf suffered from extreme bouts of mental ill health during the First World War, and her sister-in-law’s pamphlet may have passed her by at the time of its publication. Virginia Woolf may have read it later though. It is quite likely that Woolf’s use of photographs of military parades, generals and admirals in Right Against Might might have suggested Virginia Woolf’s different use of such photographs in her 1938 work, Three Guineas. While Bella Sidney Woolf was perfectly sincere in her admiration of these figures, Virginia Woolf used them satirically in a feminist view of their desire that wars were created and conducted by men. The Bloomsbury Group generally would have strongly disapproved of a Bella Sidney Woolf’s pro-war pamphlet, Right Against Might, perhaps guided here by the pamphleteer’s brother, Leonard Woolf. However, it is not clear that Virginia Woolf knew of her sister-in-law’s pamphlet.

By contrast, we have evidence that Virginia Woolf was at least aware of Clive Bell’s Peace at Once, even if she did not read it. In letter no. 729, written on 30 September 1915, Virginia Woolf expressed amusement at the effect of Clive Bell’s pamphlet on his father: “I hear from Vanessa that old father Bell threatens complete rupture with Clive if he writes more in the style of the pamphlet. Vanessa is delighted, as she has her income safe, and need not stay with the Bells at Christmas!” (Letters 2 65). By this stage in the lives of the Bells and Virginia Woolf, it seems that Virginia no longer took her brother-in-law as seriously as she had once done. Both Clive Bell and Virginia Woolf, however, produced versions of Sir Edward Grey’s famous remark of 3 August 1914: “The lamps are going out all over Europe.” Clive Bell’s reference to lamps has been noted; Virginia Woolf’s occurred in Jacob’s Room (1922) where she states: “Now one after another lights were extinguished” (140). Bella Sidney Woolf was not as aware of the implications for the cultural life of Europe as Clive Bell and Virginia Woolf. The latter two symbolized
the cultural life illuminated by these lights and all but snuffed out by the darkness of war.

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**Works Cited**


**March, April 1918**

Virginia Woolf wrote in her essay entitled “Mary Wollstonecraft” published in the Second Series of the *Common Reader*, “Great Wars are strangely intermittent in their effects. The French Revolution took some people and tore them asunder; others it passed over without disturbing a hair of their heads. Jane Austen, it is said, never mentioned it; Charles Lamb ignored it; Beau Brummell never gave the matter a thought” (156). She wrote this in 1932, and it seems fair to assume from its tone that she was surprised at the disengagement of these three people from the events of the time. So, we might ask, what were the members of the Bloomsbury Group doing during March and April 1918, while the Second Battle of the Somme was raging in France?

The war had profoundly changed the way most of them lived. From late 1916 Vanessa Bell was at Charleston with David (“Bunny”) Garnett and Duncan Grant. As conscientious objectors they had been spared going to prison if they worked as farm labourers—not something either of them would have chosen to do. Their concerns seem to have been more with the constraints on their own lives than with fate of the men who were fighting and the events of the War itself, perhaps with cause, as Duncan was totally unsuited to hard physical labor and was suffering from rheumatism and severe weight loss. Eventually he was given a medical examination and allowed to cut the hours he worked by half. According to Frances Spalding:

By March Bunny had begun to hate farm work. He could no longer endure the stench of dung and rotting childBirths or being treated like a slave. He looked back incredulously to the untroubled freedom and happiness he had enjoyed with the Quakers at the beginning of the War in 1914 and 1915. He had already let them know that he was looking for alternative employment and heard in March that Robert Tatlock, who was about to depart for Russia, had recommended him to look after the office in London on behalf of the Russian Mission. When Duncan learnt of this he announced that if Bunny left him he would not be recognised by Paris dealers, “crossed the Channel with a destroyer escort and a silver airship overhead” (Fenton 118). As they passed in the train through Amiens, the city was under German bombardment, the British troops having been driven back from their trenches near the Somme. When Keynes, Holmes, Austen Chamberlain and the rest arrived in Paris they were disconcerted to find the Germans were shelling the city with Big Bertha, a huge, thundering cannon. In fact, the entire Degas collection had came close to destruction when the house opposite the Durand-Ruel Gallery was fired on only two days before the sale.

Agitating news from the Front dampened the enthusiasm for buying. An hour into the proceedings shells began to fall and, according to Holmes, “there was a considerable rush for the door, [...] at least one prominent Paris dealer being among the fugitives” (119). Bidding did not really take off until the National Gallery was competing with the Louvre for Delacroix’s portrait, *Baron Schwiter*. Holmes bought it for the National Gallery, along with Corot’s *Claudian Aqueduct* and eleven other pictures, including four by Ingres and two by Manet. Holmes passed on a small Cézanne study of apples, which Keynes purchased for himself, and excited by the whole business of bidding, bought a study by Ingres, two paintings by Delacroix and a pencil study by him for the frieze “Bellum” in the Salon du Roi, Palais Bourbon. But his greatest coup was the acquisition of the Cézanne still life and this was the start of his considerable personal art collection. According to Spalding, the “small
painting of apples by Cézanne [...] became the object of intense study by the Bloomsbury painters” (Vanessa Bell 174).

Maynard helped to pack up all the purchases, which was not easy, as many people, frightened by the bombardment, were trying to leave Paris; this meant that packing cases were hard to find, as were seats on trains. Fortunately the Allied Conference had finished, and the Mission had a carriage booked on the evening train to Boulogne. Keynes, Holmes and Chamberlain “trundled back past Amiens eating strange meals—breakfast consisted of chocolate, bread and sauterne” (Fenton 120). At Boulogne the Delacroix, in its huge case, was hoisted on board and stacked in comparative shelter on the deck. They crossed the channel in convoy with two hospital ships and, at Folkestone, had to wait an hour in very rough seas while the many wounded soldiers disembarked.

Maynard was given a lift from Folkestone by Austen Chamberlain in a government car and was dropped on the main road at the end of the farm track leading to Charleston (Bell 138). Exhausted, he hid a suitcase containing the Cézanne in the hedge and walked up to the house, where they were all having dinner. Duncan and Bunny ran down the track in the moonlight and rescued the suitcase (Bell 138). This painting of apples was to have a profound influence on Duncan’s future work, but that evening he was more excited by the Delacroix pencil study, given to him by Maynard as a thank-you for the part he had played in the whole venture.

The Germans were trying to starve the British by means of a submarine blockade and food was extremely short. Vanessa supplemented the meagre rations by keeping rabbits, ducks, Belgian hares and a pig. Clive was working as a laborer on Philip Morrell’s estate at Garsington and when he, with his mistress Mary Hutchinson, or Maynard, came to stay they always brought food and wine with them.

At that time Virginia and Leonard Woolf were living in Richmond and going down to Asheham House at weekends. In a fairly rare reference to the war Virginia had written to Vanessa on January 31:

Well, you almost lost me. Nine bombs on Kew; 7 people killed in one house, hotel crushed[,] [...] I know that raids don’t interest you when no one you know is killed so I won’t describe our night in the kitchen. Barbara was with us and we all slept on the floor—we have mattresses laid there every night. Talking to the servants from 8 to 1.15 (as we did the first time) is so boring—“but not so boring as a description” as you justly remark—so I pass on rapidly to Ottoline. [...] (Woolf, Congenial Spirits 96).

On April 5 she wrote in her diary:

Off we went to Asheham on Thursday, in such a burst of summer heat that people in the tube pulled blinds down[.] [...] The daffodils were out & the guns I suppose could be heard from the downs. Even to me, who have no immediate stake, & repudiate the importance of what is being done, there was an odd pallor in those particular days of sunshine. [...] But this time the food difficulties certainly increased one’s discomfort. One day we came back from a long walk to find the third of a loaf of bread on the table. No more to be had in the house. This was due to bad management on Nelly’s part, but then at Asheham it’s very easy to manage badly & needs considerable thought, cycling & carrying to manage even tolerably. At one point the servants wrought themselves into the usual row. The relief of being back in comparative plenty & anyhow next door to shops is quite recognisable. We came up on Friday, went straight to lunch at Clifford’s Inn, dived in to Partridge & Cooper, & then came home Diary 1 [D] 131-32).

The idea of the Hogarth Press had been conceived in 1916. Leonard and Virginia had always been interested in printing and Leonard felt that a manual occupation would help to relax Virginia and take her mind for a few hours a day off her writing. In 1917 they were walking up Farringdon Street and passed the Excelsior Printing Company, which sold every kind of printing machinery and materials. Leonard wrote in his autobiography:

Nearly all the implements of printing are materially attractive and we stared through the window at them rather like two hungry children gazing at buns and cakes in a baker shop window. [...] We went in and explained our desire and dilemma to a very sympathetic man in a brown overall. He was extremely encouraging. He could not only sell us a printing machine, type, chases, cases, and all the necessary implements, but also a 16-page pamphlet which would infallibly teach us how to print.

When the stuff was delivered to us in Richmond, we set it all up in the dining- room and started to teach ourselves to print. After a month [...] we set to work and printed a 32-page pamphlet, demy octavo[,] [...] We even had the temerity to print four wood-cuts by CArrington. I must say, looking at a copy of this curious publication today, that the printing is rather creditable for two persons who had taught themselves for a month in a dining-room. (Beginning Again 234-35)

A year later Leonard and Virginia were very much more proficient, and, on April 13, 1918 Virginia wrote:

Today Saturday we printed, & finished 6 pages. As we only began on Tuesday we have done a record. A cold dismal day, & very bad news in the newspapers. [...] And Ireland has conscription. If one didn’t feel that politics are an elaborate game got up to keep a pack of men trained for that sport in condition, one might be dismal; one sometimes is dismal; sometimes I try to worry out what some of the phrases we’re ruled by mean. I doubt whether most people even do that. Liberty for instance (D1 138).

But politics and the war were forgotten. In a letter to Lytton Strachey Virginia writes:

We’ve been asked to print Mr Joyce’s new novel [Ulysses], every printer in London and most in the provinces having refused. First there’s a dog that p’s—then there’s a man that forths, and one can be monotonous even on that subject—moreover, I don’t believe that his method, which is highly developed, means much more than cutting out the explanations and putting in thoughts between dashes. So, I don’t think we shall do it. [...] (Congenial Spirits 99).

The second part of the entry in her diary for 18 April reads:

[We]...came up in a bitter wind & rain to the Omega; so to Gordon Square; where first the new Delacroix & then the Cezanne were produced. There are 6 apples in the Cezanne picture. What can six apples not be? I began to wonder. Theres their relationship to each other, & their colour, & and their solidity. To Roger & Nessa, moreover, it was a far more intricate question than this. It was a question of pure paint or mixed; if pure which colour; emerald or verdian; & then the laying on of the paint; & the time he’d spent & how he’d altered it, & why, & when he’d painted it—We carried it into the next room, & Lord! How it showed up the pictures there, how he’d altered it, & why, & when he’d painted it—We carried it into the next room, & Lord! How it showed up the pictures there, as if you put a real stone among sham ones; the canvas of the others seemed scraped with a thin layer of rather cheap paint. The apples positively got redder & rounder & greener. I suspect some very mysterious quality of potation in that picture (D1 140-41).

While the Bloomsberries were preoccupied with Cézanne’s apples, they would have been aware that others in Britain were mourning the loss of fathers, husbands, sons; between March 21 and April 5 1918, in the Second Battle of the Somme, 160,000 allied soldiers were killed or wounded and 90,000 were taken prisoner.
Biographically and ideologically speaking, there are some important connections between Virginia Woolf and Vernon Lee (1856–1935), one of the very few living women writers whose work is mentioned in *A Room of One’s Own*. Both Woolf and Lee were largely self-taught and operated at a distance from academic institutions and academic scholarship: indeed, Lee’s identification of herself as an outsider strongly resonates with Woolf’s self-positioning in *Three Guineas* and thereafter. Each experienced the Great War from the home front. While Angela Leighton has gone so far as to suggest in a comparative analysis of their aesthetics that Lee provides one model for the composite figure that is Lily Briscoe, we might see something of her in *Between the Acts* as well, in which the pageant Miss La Trobe orchestrates in the face of the Second World War is comparable to some of Lee’s own efforts in protesting the first war. Both women thought, as expressed in Woolf’s words from January 3, 1915, not only that “patriotism is a base emotion,” but also that the “appeal to feel together” (*Diary 1.5*) has dangerous effects.

Although a self-identified cosmopolitan who lived mainly in Italy, Lee spent most of the Great War in Britain, unable to return to Florence. In 1920, Woolf met her for a fourth and seemingly final time1 “at the 1917 Club” (*Letters 2* 550), founded by Leonard Woolf, where political and aesthetic radicals mixed: Lee was something of both. While Woolf had spent her early war years struggling with and recovering from illness and later composing both *Night and Day* and her early experimental fictions, her older contemporary had taken an active public role in condemning the war. An early member of the Union for Democratic Control—of which Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Bertrand Russell, Ottoline and Phillip Morrell, Adrian and Karin Stephen, and Leonard Woolf were all members—Lee attended meetings, appeared on platforms, and wrote letters to editors, protesting the demonization of Germany and all things German in the production of propaganda and the propagation of patriotism. Even before the war, as Gillian Beer has established, “Lee’s vehement advocacy of pacifism brought her into conflict with many of her feminist friends and associates” (111), including Ethel Smyth, during the militant phase of the suffrage campaign.

Although clearly connected to and cognizant of the suffrage movement and its leadership, Lee was never fully engaged by feminism: opposition to war and violence seems always to have been paramount in her thinking. This suggests one point of difference from Woolf, who described herself to Margaret Llewellyn Davies in January 1916 as “becom[ing] steadily more feminist, owing to the Times” and “wonder[ing] how this preposterous masculine fiction keeps going a day longer—without some vigorous young woman pulling us together and marching through it” (*L2* 76). Lee certainly “ranked the press among the most culpable sustainers of the slaughter” (Wright 120), but she openly challenged that “fiction” without describing it as a matter solely of masculinist aggression. We see an example of her rhetoric on this point from the hybrid anti-war text, *Satan the Waster*, published in 1920: “if especially so many of our women, [...] have learned to read with complacency accounts of such doings as should have turned a butcher sick, this has been due originally to the love which each of those women has borne to a husband, nay even more to a son or a brother; due to the delusion that what *he* did could not be otherwise than innocent, nay holy; the delusion wherewith their love has protected itself against desecration” (156). Even if, as Helen Wussow has argued, “Woolf considered the Great War a completely masculine occupation” (37) and found it difficult to reconcile “her belief that war is antithetical to female nature” (38) with the positions and actions of so many Englishwomen, Lee did not. The critical pacifist position she occupied, as an older woman with a great deal more experience, clearly anticipates the one Woolf would herself arrive at later on in her own life, in her 40s and 50s, when Woolf also diagnosed the complicity of “the daughters of educated men” with the war machine.

During the first year of the war, Lee composed a short allegorical work entitled “The Ballet of the Nations,” published by Chatto & Windus in 1915, with illustrations by the pacifist Maxwell Armfield. Patterned after a medieval morality play and embodying Lee’s alienation from the war “delusion,” it represents Satan as the chief architect of mass slaughter, who authorizes the Ballet-Master Death to assemble a corps of warring dancer-nations, while he gathers an orchestra of Human Passions. In a rhetorical move that anticipates Woolf’s creation a few years later of the quasi-allegorical figures of Conversion and Proportion in *Mrs. Dalloway*, these Passions include the personifications Fear, Suspicion, Panic, Self-Righteousness as well as Heroism and Idealism. The orchestra and the dancers perform for “an audience of neutrals, Sleepy Virtues and Ages-to-Come, who,” in the words of art historian Grace Brockington, “enact our responses to the imagined show, forcing us to recognize that, as readers, we too are implicated” and “casting [...] the audience as an active player” (125). Such a scenario, as Beer was first to note and Gill Plain has also explored, clearly anticipates the concluding pageant of *Between the Acts*. Unlike La Trobe’s work, Lee’s unorthodox play was never performed, though it did receive at least one public reading.

Over the next five years, Lee massively expanded this text, renaming it *Satan the Waster*, to include a long prose Prologue, a longer version of the ballet, a much less allegorical epilogue that skewers the state of European affairs leading up to the war while replaying its behind-the-scenes events via gramophone and cinematograph, and extensive prose notes to both the Prologue and the Ballet that take up the war from philosophical and psychological vantage points. Though I have no evidence that Woolf read *Satan the Waster*, an unfriendly leading article about it appeared in the *TLS* in June 1920, so we can safely assume she at least read that. And George Bernard Shaw praised it in the *Nation* in September of that year in no uncertain terms: “Vernon Lee, as her dated notes to this book prove, has never been wrong once since the war began[,] [...] Vernon Lee, by sheer intellectual force, training, knowledge, and character kept her head when Europe was a mere lunatic asylum” (758). Although at times obscure and unwieldy, *Satan the Waster* lays

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 24th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf held at Loyola University Lake Shore Campus and co-sponsored by Northern Illinois University in June 2015.
out a remarkable analysis that foreshadows the positions Woolf was to take up over the next two decades. Lee’s and Woolf’s ideas converge around the meaning and effects of patriotism.

Kirsty Martin articulates one of the key motifs of Satan the Waster, which concerns “how people in war-time remain blinkered to the sufferings of opposing countries. [Lee] associates group emotion not with an acknowledgement of what is not ourself, but with a hysterical enlargement of private selfishness” (73). Patriotism is the name of that binding and binding agent, with roots in identifications and attachments that take on an almost physiological force and produce a bodily response. “Love of child, family, tribe, country and mankind at large,” Lee writes, “are successive expansions of Egoism,” and:

the idea of these various creatures and abstractions being gathered, one after the other, into the warm depths of the self, growing into the fibres of the individual brain and nerves, until that lump of otherness, that alien, even abstract, something, has become so integral a part of ourself that the mere name of the child or family, the mere colours of the national flag, not the mere words “humanity,” “justice,” or “liberty” will kindle the eye, send the blood throbbing to the temples, brace the muscles and subvert the whole habitual flow of our life.

(195)

In expanding on these ideas for Satan the Waster, Lee also renamed the orchestra to emphasize her point. Satan says, “Patriotism is the collective name of the whole orchestra whom I train for these performances; Human Passions, splendid or sordid, delicate or nasty, all seated, cheek by jowl, playing their instruments without whose steady flow of sublime music and nerve-rending din the Nations could not dance their Dance of Death obedient to my great Ballet Master’s baton” (23). And the Ballet-Master instructs that orchestra in its duties before the bloody performance begins:

Let me remind the Passions about to take their seats in the Orchestra of Patriotism that the duration of our performance depends entirely on their activity. [...] The members of the Orchestra of Patriotism are therefore urgently requested to replenish their energies by unceasing use of the appropriate refreshments, carefully warmed up common-places and fiery drams of eloquence, which will be handed round unceasingly by Lord Satan’s lackeys of the Press and Pulpit (43).

All the passions, whether “splendid or sordid,” work together, stoked by “Press and Pulpit,” to fuel and sustain the mass bloodshed of the ballet.

Woolf also subsequently described patriotism as binding together different individuals and affects. She shared Lee’s sense that the construction of an “intolerable unanimity” (Three Guineas 125) deforms both the collective and the individual: “is there not something,” she asks in Three Guineas, “in the conglomeration of people into societies that releases what is most selfish and violent, least rational and humane, in the individuals themselves?” (124-25). Yet she also continues to suggest (as Lee does not) that the different historical experience of women of her class should mitigate their wholesale absorption into this collective. She claims that the educated man’s sister may differ from her brother in “her class should mitigate their wholesale absorption into this collective. She (as Lee does not) that the different historical experience of women of her releases what is most selfish and violent, least rational and humane, in

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Woolf also subsequently described patriotism as binding together different individuals and affects. She shared Lee’s sense that the construction of an “intolerable unanimity” (Three Guineas 125) deforms both the collective and the individual: “is there not something,” she asks in Three Guineas, “in the conglomeration of people into societies that releases what is most selfish and violent, least rational and humane, in the individuals themselves?” (124-25). Yet she also continues to suggest (as Lee does not) that the different historical experience of women of her class should mitigate their wholesale absorption into this collective. She claims that the educated man’s sister may differ from her brother in “her interpretation of the word ‘patriotism’” (12) such that

When [the brother] says, [...] “I am fighting to protect our country,” and thus seeks to rouse her patriotic emotion, she will ask herself, “What does ‘our country’ mean to me an outsider?” To decide this she will analyse the meaning of patriotism in her own case. (127)

That analysis then becomes the basis for the stance of “indifference” that Woolf’s persona adopts. Ultimately, the refusal to join the educated man’s society in Three Guineas rests on a critical resistance to submerging the individual in the mass and to reproducing that group dynamic: to join would mean that “we should merge our identity in yours; follow and repeat and score still deeper the old worn runs in which society, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is grinding out with intolerable unanimity ‘Three hundred millions spent upon arms’” (125).

Most interestingly, both Woolf and Lee identified the recurrence of the attitudes and behaviors that prepared the ground for war with that new technology. As part of the epilogue to the ballet, Lee’s gramophone works in tandem with the cinematograph to unveil what her Muse of History calls “The real Reality” (64). The stage directions indicate that we should see and hear:

public offices, newspaper sanctuums, embassy reception rooms, sometimes even quite humble private houses; also committee tables and banqueting tables [...] lobbies in various countries, clubrooms and Houses of Parliament and Senates in different parts of the globe. They are full of figures in groups of twos and threes, [...] most frequently, perhaps, dining and playing bridge, and almost always smoking. These figures are mainly masculine, elderly, often bald, and not always very dignified; some in uniform, some in plain clothes [...] The action, if it may be called action, like the talking, is a perpetual shuffle from place to place and topic to topic [...] the main impression is of sentences like [...] Things seem to be coming to a head, ‘We shall have to decide’; the whole being interspersed with a good deal of very friendly laughter. (64-65)

Even here, Lee does not entirely let women off the hook in recording the “private realities” (vii) or the behind-the-scenes maneuvers that led up to and sustained the war, but the “mainly masculine” figures are surely those who promote and profit from it. Their “perpetual shuffle” and repeated sentences imply the workings of the great patriarchal machine that Woolf so frequently analyzed in her late writings. Operated by Science and associated with “Life and Progress” (38), Lee’s gramophone continues to play even when the Human Passions flag (54), and it is inscribed with the phrase “His Master’s Voice” (63). This gramophone, like those in Three Guineas and Between the Acts, surely deepens those “old worn rats” just as Woolf follows Lee’s path, with some divergences, in generating her own critique of that “intolerable unanimity.”

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Woolf and Whistleblowing: From World War I to WikiLeaks

If the Internet meme heralds a new form of art, it is surely the art of misquotation. Did you know, for example, that Adolf Hitler once declared: “When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace”? (This quote, also erroneously attributed to Jimi Hendrix, actually comes from William Gladstone. Easy mistake.) Or maybe you’ve heard that Helen Keller once advised: “Speak softly, and carry a big stick.” (This was, of course, Teddy Roosevelt’s foreign policy.) These are extreme examples—symptomatic, to be sure, of the era of “alternative facts.” However, most misquotations that make the rounds on Facebook, Twitter, and the blogosphere are at least somewhat plausible, often subjuunctively giving voice to what we would have liked certain individuals to have said. For instance, Marilyn Monroe is believed to have quipped: “Well-behaved women seldom make history.” (In fact, this was Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, a professor of history at Harvard.) Similarly, Virginia Woolf has not escaped the distortions of the meme. One of the most persistent Woolf misquotations—one that even appeared on the Facebook page of the 25th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf!—is the line: “For most of history Anonymous was a woman.” This one isn’t too far off the mark. What Woolf actually wrote, in A Room of One’s Own (1929), while discussing the historical marginalization of female voices in literature, was this: “I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman” (53).

What makes this particular meme interesting is the way it has become appropriated—if one can appropriate a misappropriation—by the so-called “hacktivist” group, Anonymous, who use anonymity as a cover for waging war on various government, business, and religious organizations. The members, who refer to themselves as “Anons,” adhere to what a 2010 press release describes as “a very loose and decentralized command structure that operates on ideas rather than directives” (“ANON,” par. 2). In other words, Anonymous has no leader, no headquarters, no charter; it is a loosely connected group of individuals across the globe who have become collectively responsible, in the last few years, for launching cyberattacks against institutions and websites as diverse as PayPal, Sony, the New York Stock Exchange, the Westboro Baptist Church, the Church of Scientology, and, most recently, ISIS. Perhaps the best description of Anonymous is Wired journalist Quinn Norton’s characterization of the group as “a non-organization of pranksters-turned-activists-turned-hackers-turned-hot-mess-of-law-enforcement-drama” (par. 2). In keeping with its name, its public face is a mask—the image of a smirking, mustachioed Guy Fawkes from Alan Moore and David Lloyd’s graphic novel, V for Vendetta—a mask that can be worn by anyone, and is. The fact that the Woolf (mis)quotation tends to show up on webpages and in tweets associated with the group is therefore somewhat ironic; in its public persona, at least, Anonymous isn’t a woman.

Nevertheless, Woolf’s twenty-first-century cameo on these sites may be more appropriate than even the Anons themselves may realize, given that her political and feminist writings—in particular, her 1938 polemic, Three Guineas—anticipate, in significant ways, the hacktivist mentality not only of Anonymous but also of WikiLeaks. Essentially, Woolf advances the idea that engaged citizenship requires a certain amount of pushback, controlled leakage, even mutiny, in order to keep the ship of democracy afloat—especially when its course drifts toward fascism. As Judith Allen has argued, Three Guineas encourages its reader to become, in effect, a “whistleblower” (26). But Woolf’s work also speaks to our current concerns over the uses and misuses of information by the media. Although she wrote her treatise with the Second World War looming on the horizon, her critique of nationalism and militarism may be more properly traced to the First World War, a conflict that Woolf believed was born of misplaced loyalties, ill-informed ideals, and manipulative reports, all of which she consigns in Three Guineas to the domain of the “unreal,” the fake.

There is a telling scene in The Years (1937) when Peggy and Eleanor’s taxi stops under the statue of Edith Cavell, the British nurse who was arrested and executed by firing squad in German-occupied Belgium in 1915. During the war, her tragic story became a cause célébre, concentrating anti-German sentiment and inspiring many young men to enlist out of a romantic desire to protect British womanhood. Her presence in Woolf’s novel is considerably more ironic. Peggy, looking up at the statue’s “cadaverous pallor,” remarks that it “reminds [her] of an advertisement of sanitary towels,” and Eleanor observes that the quote carved on the plinth—“Patriotism is not enough”—was “[the] only fine thing that was said in the war” (336). Jane Marcus interprets this as Woolf’s way of “[protesting] against the state’s distorting propaganda” (“Asylums” 135). Transformed into a patriotic icon, Cavell, a pacifist, is effectively silenced by her own monument. As Marcus points out, the more hawkish inscription “For King and Country” at the top overshadows the nurse’s “feminist” quote at the base (135). The statue is thus representative of Woolf’s larger concern with how words, images, and lives come to be appropriated by the state to suit an agenda. Cavell is just the sort of symbolic figure who might have inspired the young Jacob Flanders, reading his Daily Telegraph on the train to Cambridge, to join the doomed enterprise his surname portends; like the famous blood-red poppies of Flanders fields lore, she is violence aestheticized.

Three Guineas, Woolf’s nonfiction counterpart to The Years, continues the novel’s ideological critique. Prompted to write, in part, by a series of horrific photographs from the Spanish Civil War showing what Woolf describes, in a refrain throughout the text, as “ruined houses” and “dead bodies” (14), her pacifist treatise explores the potential agency of women at a time of escalating violence, focusing on the way in which women are both subject to and excluded from what she calls “the procession”: the military, academic, and industrial institutions that perpetuate warfare. Essentially, Woolf’s purpose is to demonstrate that fascism, or what she would later refer to as “subconscious Hitlerism” (“Thoughts” 245), is as much a British problem as a continental one. In response to warmongering, Woolf calls upon her female contemporaries to form a “Society of Outsiders” who would serve as a sort of resistance cell in opposition to patriarchal power.

How would such a Society operate? Referencing the war poetry of Wilfred Owen, Woolf points out that, as powerful as his verses are in showing the barbarity of the battlefield, rhetoric alone is insufficient to prevent war (15). Instead, Woolf proposes a modus operandi that combines passive resistance with critical investigation. Upon entering the working world, the outsiders would, among other things, “bind themselves to obtain full knowledge of professional practices, and to reveal any instance of tyranny or abuse in their profession” (32–3). Here, we see why Allen is justified in comparing the Woolf of Three Guineas to a figure like Edward Snowden, the former National Security Agency subcontractor who exposed the U.S. government’s “unconstitutional eavesdropping” on its own citizens (26). The parallel to WikiLeaks is likewise illuminating. In a 2013 interview with the Slovenian newspaper Delo, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, characterizes the organization’s role as a “spy for the people,” a kind of intelligence

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1 An earlier version of this paper titled “Woolf, Whistleblowing, and WikiLeaks: Three Guineas in the Twenty-First Century” was presented at the 25th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf in Bloomsburg, PA.
undermines the very principle of spying, the principle of secrecy, since its goal is to make secrets public. People who help WikiLeaks are no longer whistleblowers who denounce the illegal practices of private companies […] to the public authorities; they denounce to the wider public these public authorities themselves. (Par. 4)

That is to say, by exposing not simply isolated incidents of power abuse, but rather the ideological foundations of power itself, the “spy for the people” is the little dog who pulls the curtain away from what Woolf in Three Guineas calls “unreal loyalties” (95), the false idols of nationalism, capitalism, school pride, and other institutionalized values. “Whistleblowers,” as Žižek goes on to argue, “do something much more important than stating the obvious by way of denouncing the openly oppressive regimes: they render public the unfreedom that underlies the very situation in which we experience ourselves as free” (par. 9).

One way in which both Woolf and WikiLeaks reach their audience is through the photographic image. WikiLeaks achieved global notoriety in 2010 after releasing footage of a U.S. Army Apache helicopter strike on unarmed civilians mistaken for insurgents in Baghdad in 2007, which resulted in nine deaths, including two Reuters journalists, and left several others severely wounded, among them two children on their way to school. While the incident itself was not classified, with details and transcripts of the attack freely available, the government withheld the gunship footage, knowing that the visual of the attack would do far more damage than the facts alone. WikiLeaks understood this. So did Chelsea Manning (then Bradley Manning), who leaked the footage to Assange, along with a hoard of other files. The images speak for themselves. Ruined houses. Dead bodies. These are the themes that also haunt Three Guineas. Woolf begins her book with a verbal description of a visual horror, photos from the war in Spain:

They are not pleasant photographs to look upon. . . . This morning’s collection contains the photograph of what might be a man’s body, or a woman’s; it is so mutilated that it might, on the other hand, be the body of a pig. But those certainly are dead children, and that undoubtedly is the section of a house. A bomb has torn open the side; there is still a birdcage hanging in what was presumably the sitting-room, but the rest of the house looks like nothing so much as a bunch of spillkins suspended in mid-air. (14)

Unlike WikiLeaks, Woolf chose not to include the images themselves in her text, fearing, according to Marcus, that they would only “incite more volunteers to go off to war” (xxi). More specifically, Woolf suggests that the “emotion” released by the photographs could have a similar effect to the propaganda of the First World War, inspiring men to “once more take up arms—in Spain, as before in France—in defence of peace” (15). Instead, she juxtaposes her vivid description of these scenes with other photographs representing the pillars of patriarchy, identified by Alice Staveley as former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, then Chancellor of Cambridge, in his academic gown and medieval mortarboard; Lord Hewart, the sitting Lord Chancellor and bewigged embodiment of the law; Cosmo Gordon Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, with mitre and crook; and Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts, wearing enough military medals to decorate a Christmas tree. The ridiculousness of these images, paired with the visceral realities of war, has the effect of undermining the supposed honor and heroism of the “the procession,” revealing it to be little more than a costume party where little boys play with big sticks.

In Three Guineas, Woolf is very much aware that stepping on the toes of authority in this way is a dangerous game, and she advises her hypothetical Society to proceed with caution: “Secrecy is essential” (141). Accordingly, a key feature of the Society’s composition is its spectrality: “It would have no office, no committee, no secretary; it would call no meetings; it would hold no conferences” (126). (So much for the International Virginia Woolf Society becoming a Society of Outsiders.) Nationless, borderless, and leaderless, Woolf’s Society constitutes a rhizomatic non-organization that must remain, she suggests, “anonymous and elastic before everything” (126). Woolf’s call for subterfuge is reinforced by the rhetorical effect of Three Guineas itself, which combines quasi-fictional, epistolary chapters with extensive scholarly endnotes. As Jane Marcus points out in her introduction to the annotated Harcourt edition, these elements turn Three Guineas into an “interactive text,” one very much ahead of its time: “Twenty-first-century readers, who use the Internet and other technological media, should be at home with this book in a way that earlier readers were not” (xlvii).

If the epistolary structure serves as a distancing mechanism, or as a way for Woolf to mask her arguments, it also universalizes. The letter writers in Three Guineas speak not for one but for many. They give voice to the untapped potential of the very Society that Woolf proposes, a Society that already exists, like a fifth column “between the lines,” as she puts it at one point, referring to the manner in which minor but important acts of resistance appear in the newspapers every day (136). It is in this respect that Woolf most clearly gestures toward the new millennium: her attentiveness to the powerful, collective agency of human beings amplified through media. This may also explain why contemporary commentators on Internet culture sometimes sound accidentally Woolfian, as when Wired magazine’s Quinn Norton writes that the real Anonymous is not the individuals who make headlines, but rather a “sea of voices, all experimenting with new ways of being in the world” (par. 35).

To think of Virginia Woolf in this way is to reexamine the place of modernism—and late modernism, in particular—in the genealogy of dissenting politics. Woolf was not alone in theorizing a relationship between citizenship and sedition. Another of her female contemporaries, Rebecca West, famously ends her 1964 study, The New Meaning of Treason, by declaring:

There is a case for the traitor. […] It is our duty to readjust constantly the balance between public and private liberties. Men must be capable of imagining and executing and insisting on social change, if they are to reform or even maintain civilization, and capable too of furnishing the rebellion which is sometimes necessary if society is not to perish of immobility. Therefore all men should have a drop of treason in their veins, if the nations are not to go soft like so many sleepy pears. (361)

As West’s choice of the masculine subject illustrates, however, the discourse of dissent also tends to forget its own history, its crucial expression—as Three Guineas reveals—in the intersection of feminism and politics, a dimension that is likewise more or less absent from current debates over institutional transparency and the ethics of whistleblowing. Perhaps it’s time to consider the extent to which, in its modernist lineage, Anonymous is a woman, a woman who argued that rules are only challenged through unruly actions. After all, as Marilyn Monroe once (never) said, “Well-behaved women seldom make history.”

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REVIEWS

WORLD WAR I AND AMERICAN ART
320 pages. $60 cloth.


The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA) published World War I and American Art to accompany a most extraordinary exhibition of art about, against, and for the Great War, informing the experience both from the trenches and, significantly, at home. Central to both the exhibition and the book, in spite of the title, is a commemoration of the war itself, and not just the 19 months (6 April 1917-11 November 1918) that the U.S. was in the conflict.1 On January 7th, the day the exhibition review appeared in the New York Times, I was fortunate to be visiting it in Philadelphia (during the 2017 MLA Conference) and watched what was literally a buying frenzy for the impressive cloth book (9.6 x 1.4 x 11.5”—320 pages—4.7 pounds).2 The evocative title of Holland Cotter’s review of the exhibition (“World War I—The Quick. The Dead. The Artists”) emphasizes the ever-present “links” between art and politics: “Although politicians at the time spun the conflict—which the public increasingly understood to be a murderous mistake—as the war that would end all wars, it did the opposite. It set the model for World War II”—(1). Yet it is not inevitability but ambivalence and multinationalism, inclusiveness and range, that make this exhibition great, and are given in the book.3

Ambivalence is less emphatic and themes of the exhibition are rendered more readily accessible in the freebies distributed on site. One is the eight-page ALL TOGETHER! A Family Guide for World War I and American Art, with the red, white, and blue-framed poster of Uncle Sam: “I Want YOU for the U.S. Army.” Directed at “families to use while moving through the gallery” (2), the guide does not mention that this iconic image is clearly modeled on Alfred Leete’s 1914 “Your country needs YOU,” with Lord Kitchener pointing a finger.4 Nevertheless, given its intended audience, the pamphlet does include thoughtful and kid-friendly questions involving common symbology and national identity in a painting by Childe Hassam (2), for example, and the experience of living in a “small place like barracks or trenches,” as seen in a painting by “Harlem Hellfighter” Horace Pippin (5).

The other giveaway is a six-sided brochure with the name of the exhibition and its dates in Philadelphia (4 November 2016-9 April 2017), and the cover illustration, a detail of the book jacket of the exhibition catalog: Claggett Wilson’s Flower of Death—The Bursting of a Heavy Shell—Not as It Looks, but as It Feels and Sounds and Smells

1 As David Reynolds points out, however, although “4.7 million Americans were mobilized and half of them traveled to Europe, the US Army was involved in serious combat for less than six months” (21).

2 I was lucky to buy one early on, as orders for copies were coming in from all over the United States as I waited to pay. The book is now available on Amazon.com at a reduced price.

3 Although it seems to be a catalog, “the book” is merely “published in conjunction with the exhibition World War I and American Art, organized by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts” (320).

4 In his article, Reynolds shows the Kitchener poster in Fig. 2 and refers to Leete’s “clear borrowing” of the image (22-23).
Great War, as Pearl James demonstrates in “Citizen-Consumers in the history, World War I is often called the forgotten war in the United States. This number is the more challenge set forth by Vera Brittain: “I wish those people who write so glibly about this being a holy War, and the orators who talk so much about 10 cases—of mustard gas in its early stages” (qtd. in Lubin 36-37).

World War I and American Art includes 175 illustrations and plates in addition to 25 “works illustrated but not exhibited.” The editors are listed alphabetically in the section on their biographies, the first being the extraordinary Robert Cozzolino, known as the “curator of the dispossessed” for his attention to the underdog; the second, Anne Classen Knutson is regarded as “an authority on World War I propaganda posters”; the third, the academic and author David M. Lubin, disagrees in his book Grand Illusions with the conventional appraisal of Gassed “as war-mongering by another name” (60) (307). Each of the editors has also contributed a scholarly essay to the volume, and each essay is lushly illustrated with works from the exhibition. In addition there are 153 plates at the end including a full representation of Claggett Wilson’s Flower of Death, plate 70.

However diverse the experiences of war (“Not everyone experienced the war on the same terms,” as Brigham observes in the Foreword [7]), two groups in particular are given special attention: African American soldiers (including a work by Gifford Beal [see plate 39]) and American women including Georgia O’Keeffe, known as “a Stieglitz Circle modernist” (7-8; see plates 56, 57). In addition to the Foreword and Introduction, the book includes eight scholarly essays, each of which provides a lens through which to see the fine lines and shadows in the artistic renderings. For example, although the generally accepted number of combat deaths during the war is ten million, the casualty figure rises to more than sixteen million when civilians are included (Cozzolino, Knutson and Lubin, Introduction 12). This number is the more significant one when we consider that, however central to British cultural history, World War I is often called the forgotten war in the United States. And, as the editors point out, That Liberty Shall Not Perish From the Earth by Joseph Pennell (1918, plate 3) “now looks prescient to a generation that lived through the unreality of an attack on New York City and its apocalyptic results” (Introduction 12).

Much of the cultural reality in the United States is also a legacy of the Great War, as Pearl James demonstrates in “Citizen-Consumers in the American Iconosphere During World War I,” through her discussion of what the editors call the “inescapable media environment saturated with seductive, sentimental, nationalistic, and above all, psychologically persuasive images that prompt viewers (‘citizen-consumers’) to take actions they might not otherwise have taken” (Introduction 12). In fact, James goes so far as to put our own media reality on a par with that of the war years: “The visual media environment of 1914-18 was, like our own, revolutionary in the way it changed and expanded over a short period of time” (James 45).

Yet, as Anne Classen Knutson points out in “Hidden in Plain Sight: World War I in the Art of John Marin, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Charles Burchfield” “much of the artistic community was against the war, and after U.S. entry into the fighting, these artists were effectively silenced through censorship that rivaled the British Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) and, in some ways, was worse given a racist and misogynistic predilection of the Wilson administration that implemented the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, which were enforced by the civilian American Protective League.” As Knutson notes, “This reticence […] was not the result of indifference, but rather was rooted in a pervasive culture of threat in the United States during the war years that would especially target artists” (57-58).

Especially shocking during the period was the treatment of African Americans who were encouraged to serve in the military by W. E. B. Du Bois and The Crisis (the magazine of the NAACP), in spite of the segregated terms of service. The subsequent ill treatment upon their return was particularly horrific. Amy Helene Kirschke, in “For the Privilege of Dying: The Crisis Takes On the War,” observes that, “The Crisis also offered articles on how women could support their men serving in the war, and advertisements in the back of the issues even suggested that African American women could avoid prejudice while volunteering for the war effort with the help of products for straightening hair and clearing skin” (Kirschke 79).

In the last essay in the book, Cozzolino states that, “World War I forced a multinational community of survivors to contemplate mortality through commemorations, remembrance, and mourning” (“Homecomings” 113) and observes that, “The war was unprecedented in its carnage and burdened the living with unanswered questions about the dead and the value of their sacrifice” (113).

The photographs and paintings, used as figures throughout the book and reproduced in the last section of the book (128-290), illustrate each of the eight stated themes, key among them the following works. Henry Glintenkamp’s drawing (plate 24 in World War I and American Art) was seen as a violation of the Espionage Act.

Henry Glintenkamp (1887-1946)
Physically Fit
Published in The Masses, July 1917
Medium: drawing on mount: lithograph crayon and India ink with opaque white over blue pencil
underdrawing; sheet 53.2 x 42 cm, on mount 60.2 x 46.3 cm.
Library of Congress, public domain
(Photograph taken by Karen Levenback)

5 In addition to the brochure, there is some online information about the exhibit at https://www.pafa.org/exhibitions/world-war-i-and-american-art.

6 The website lays claim to 160; though my count is as stated above. See “Exhibition Checklist” 299-306.

7 Wilson’s postwar support of women’s suffrage came after his suppression of suffragist activities before and during the war. See American Experience: The Great War DVD—which I recommend if you missed it when it aired on PBS stations in April. Several of the contributors to the books are talking heads during this 3-part, 6-hour documentary.
George Bellows’ *The Murder of Edith Cavell* (1918, plate 29) depicts the execution of the nurse Edith Cavell, reputed to have saved some 200 Allied soldiers. Bellows was not an eye-witness to the execution but pictured Cavell as an angel.

E. G. Benesch, Publisher, *Colored Man Is No Slacker* (1918, plate 40), is a recruiting poster aimed at inspiring African Americans to enlist in the armed forces.

Horace Pippin, in *The End of the War: Starting Home* (1930-33, plate 92), shows German soldiers surrendering to African Americans in a frame made by the artist and conveying a sense of total war.

The exhibition will be in New York City, at the New-York Historical Society (26 May-3 September 2017) and then in Nashville, Tennessee, at the Frist Center for Visual Arts (6 October 2017-23 January 2018). I highly recommend that you visit it or one of the many others, including, in Washington, DC, at the Library of Congress, “Echoes of the Great War: American Experiences of World War 1” (4 April 2017 through January 2019); and four exhibits at the Smithsonian Institution museums. One is at the National Air and Space Museum: “Artist Soldiers: Artistic Expression in the First World War” (6 April 2017-11 November 2018); three are at the National Museum of American History: “Uniformed Women and the Great War” (6 April 2017-on display indefinitely); “Advertising War: Selling Americans on World War 1” (ongoing); and “Modern Medicine and the Great War” (the exhibit may be ongoing). There are exhibitions as well at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison; the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities in Arvada, Colorado; and at the New York Public Library, to name a few located in the United States.

Importantly, in seeking to fill the gap caused by rendering invisible the American contribution to the art of the Great War, both the exhibition and the book calls to mind Woolf’s own definition of “historians’ histories” and phrases like “the history [of the war], is, as it is always fated to be, your history, not ours” (“The War from the Street” 4) as well as her sense that “the artist is affected as powerfully as other citizens when society is in chaos” (“The Artist and Politics” 232).8

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8 See also Levenback 23-25, 120, 144.
Virginia Woolf, “The Plumage Bill,” and the Lost Art of Fly Dressing

Virginia Woolf’s essay ‘The Plumage Bill’ (July 1920) focuses on the Bill aimed at banning controversial British feather imports. In the essay she makes a comment about salmon fishing that deserves further critical attention. Woolf writes that ‘an outburst about a fishing rod would be deemed sentimental in the extreme. Yet I suppose that salmon have their feelings’ (Essays 3 243). Woolf scholars including Melba Cuddy-Keane and Reginald Abbott have discussed these lines and I aim to contribute to their scholarship. I argue that Woolf refers to several articles published in The Times in April 1920, which directly addressed the impact of the Plumage Bill on salmon fishing. My research draws on archival material from The Times, articles which have not previously been discussed, as far as I can tell, in the context of Woolf’s plumage essay. I argue that placing this material in conversation with Cuddy-Keane and Abbott’s scholarship enables original insight into the discursive levels of humour at play in “The Plumage Bill.” My essay also offers new ways into reading Woolf’s fishing metaphors in her other works, particularly A Room of One’s Own, as I will demonstrate. I outline the Plumage Bill debate first, then fish out my salmon, and close with suggestions for intertextual readings of fishing metaphors across Woolf’s writing.

These thoughts on plumage and salmon are part of a larger catch. I am currently researching Woolf’s feather tropes and the Plumage Bill in the context of colonial trade and feathered intertexts. My research responds directly to the recent animal turn both in critical theory (see Jacques Derrida, Donna Haraway and Giorgio Agamben) and in modernist and Woolf studies. I am thinking of Carrie Rohman’s work on the animal and modernism, Christina Alt and Bonnie Kime Scott’s books on Woolf and nature, and Derek Ryan’s work on animality and Woolf. Numerous birds, dogs and other creatures run and flutter through the work of David Bradshaw, Ian Blyth, Jane Goldman, and Anna Smith, to name but a few. I cannot do justice to these theorists and critics here, and will keep my focus specific. Nevertheless, I hope the little tug at the end of my line may prove useful to Woolf scholarship.

The Plumage Bill

It is necessary to outline the Plumage Bill debate in order to place the role of salmon fishing in that debate. The British Plumage (Prohibition) Bill of 1920 aimed to ban feather imports; exotic plumes were popular fashion accessories at the time (Alt 133). Henry W. Massingham, bird conservationist, founder of the Plumage Group and advocate of the Bill, condemned the plumage trade in numerous articles published in The Times, The Nation (of which he was editor) and The Observer. The Bill collapsed the same year after failing to meet a quorum five times (Alt 133). In his weekly column in The Nation, ‘A London Diary,’ Massingham wrote (under the pseudonym Wayfarer) on the 10th of July 1920:

Now that the Plumage Bill has been smothered the massacre of the innocents will continue […] They have to be shot in parenthood for child-bearing women to flaunt the symbols of it […] But what do women care? Look at Regent Street this morning! (The Nation 463-64).

Woolf condemned Massingham for his “injustice to women” (E3 243) in “The Plumage Bill,” first published in the suffrage journal Woman’s Leader (23 July 1920). This essay is, as Andrew McNeillie puts it, Woolf’s “earliest feminist polemic” (E3 Introduction xviii). Woolf writes of her “vow taken in childhood” (E3 241) never to wear feathers and critiques feather-wearing women with a sketch of the consummate consumer, “Lady So-and-so.” This “lady of a different class altogether” has a “stupid,” “greedy” face, and is seen at the opera, “looking lovely with a lemon-coloured egret in her hair” (E3 242). Woolf then presents an even more damning portrayal of men. Birds, she says “are killed by men, tortured by men and starved by men […] with their own hands” (E3 242). She notes that plumage hunting is condemned, yet anglers continue to fish for salmon without criticism.

The unflattering sketch of Lady So-and-so aligns Woolf’s anti-plumage views with Massingham’s, but her condemnation of male involvement in the trade adds what Melba Cuddy-Keane calls a “trope of the twist” (137). Woolf’s twist is simultaneously conservationist and critical of Massingham’s misogyny. As Cuddy-Keane says, Woolf’s essay appeals to multiple audiences—such as plumage buyers, conservationists and the feminist readership of Woman’s Leader (148)—on polyvocal, ironic and multi-discursive levels. Cuddy-Keane points to both the risks of twisting...
tropes (if misread they will reinforce the dominant narrative which they seek to undercut) and to the subversive potential of twists which enable Woolf to ‘chastise[her] adversaries whilst turning them into allies’ (150). One of these multi-discursive levels involves an in-joke for readers of the Times who were familiar with the role that anglers took in the plumage debate.

**The Lost Art of Fly Dressing**

Towards the end of “The Plumage Bill” essay, Woolf echoes Massingham’s claims about women and feathers, with a parallel phrase on men and fishing. She says:

“They have to be shot for child-begetting men to flaunt the symbols of it….But what do men care? Look at Regent Street this morning!” Such an outburst about a fishing rod would be deemed sentimental in the extreme. Yet I suppose that salmon have their feelings. (E3 243)

What are we to make of these salmon? Much, I argue. Naomi Black observes that in “The Plumage Bill,” “Irony, comedy and exaggeration have […] both leavened her prose and confused, then angered a ‘progressive audience’” (104). Reginald Abbott uses the salmon passage to argue that Woolf “soft peddles” her “almost perfect” (277) critique of Massingham’s misogyny. Abbott says that Woolf’s “sex antagonism” is “diffused” by “laughter and parody” in order to “smooth down any potentially ruffled feathers in her audience” (277). While Woolf certainly uses humour to critique Massingham’s misogyny, her salmon comment does not diffuse her argument, but makes it more biting. The salmon passage, as Abbott says, proves that “Woolf could miss her mark or be misunderstood” (277). However, I have uncovered archival evidence that suggests that it is the present-day reader who is not in on the joke, and perhaps Abbott who misunderstood the significance of Woolf’s jibe about fishing.

In April 1920, it became apparent that the Plumage Bill, if it were to pass, would have a detrimental effect on the art of fly dressing for salmon fishing. One aggrieved angler wrote to the Times asking, “among the numberless people who applaud [the Bill’s] passing, how many have thought of its effect upon the salmon angler?” (“Passing of the Salmon Fly” 13). The writer explains that, “a typical fly of the ‘mixed wing’ class, contains the feathers of six foreign birds,” including the “Indian crow,” toucan, bustard, macaw, chatterer and “inevitable jungle cock” (13). The angler asks, “how can they be replaced?” (13) and answers themselves: “They cannot. Our sombrely feathered British birds offer us no substitute” (13). Another correspondent in the same issue claims “it is the amateur angler who will suffer” (13) as a result of the Bill passing. The writer recommends dyed feathers, but claims that jungle cock plumes are irreplaceable, and “nothing will solace us for this loss” (13). The writer concludes by saying “salmon fly dressing will ultimately become a lost art” (13). Woolf would likely have read these articles. She regularly wrote reviews for the Times Literary Supplement (Lee 90) and frequently mentions the newspaper in her fiction. As early as 1916 she wrote in a letter: “I become steadily more feminist, owing to The Times” (Letters 2 76). As she puts it in her short story “An Unwritten Novel” (published in 1921, a year after “The Plumage Bill”): “births, deaths, marriages, Court Circular, the habits of birds, […] it’s all in The Times!” (emphasis added, 18). When Woolf wrote ‘The Plumage Bill’, published a few months after the angler’s complaints, she could well have had their comments in mind.

On April the 9th 1920, the Times published a response to the angler. Having made enquiries at the Flyfishers Club, the newspaper recommends some native British birds whose feathers might act as substitutes to foreign plumage. They also write, “some anglers contend that the salmon is not at all particular as to the pattern or colour of the fly, and will take a fly of any colour or pattern when he is in the humour” (“Salmon Flies and the Plumage Bill” 7). Evidently, as Woolf cuttingly observes, some people do think “salmon have their feelings” (E3 243), their humours.

I do not aim to debate the ethics of fly-fishing or the emotional capacity of salmon. I seek instead to point out that Woolf’s choice of salmon is not arbitrary but intimately connected to the Plumage Bill debate. Her allusion to the anglers’ dilemma adds another layer to an already “multilevel discourse that allows […] different readers to enter the text from different positions” (Cuddy-Keane 148). To readers unfamiliar with the angler’s complaints, Woolf points up the discrepancy between the way men and women are treated (or not treated) by conservationist discourse. She points up Massingham’s hypocrisy: he blames women’s fashion for the cruelties of the plumage trade, yet ignores the sportsmen who bewail both the end of plumage hunting and the end of salmon fishing. Massingham frequently replied to correspondents in the Times, Observer and Nation on plumage-related issues. Woolf pointedly highlights the voices of the writers he ignored. To the reader familiar with the angler’s debate in the Times, Woolf’s salmon are a reminder that women are not the only consumers of plumage; they merely are the only ones condemned for that consumption. A salmon fly may contain as many, if not more varieties of plume than a feathered hat.

**Woolf as Angler?**

Fish swim across Woolf’s writings and offer us new ways into her works. Abbott and Black see “The Plumage Bill” as a “direct prototype” (Abbott 265) for Woolf’s later feminist polemics, *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*, claiming the essay “introduces three themes that would always interest Woolf: women and money, women as consumers (egret plumes), and women as producers (writers)” (Abbott 271). I offer another link between “The Plumage Bill: and *A Room of One’s Own*. In the latter, the narrator is an angler of sorts, who fishes not for salmon, but ideas: “Thought […] let its line down into the stream” (5). A “little tug” indicates “the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one’s line,” a “sort of fish” (5). Near the opening of the polemic an Oxbridge beadle “sent [Woolf’s] little fish into hiding” (5). As the narrative draws to a close, she calls for women “to let the line of thought dip deep into the stream” (98). Salmon also come to symbolize much that is elided in literature. Woolf points out that it “is part of the novelist’s convention not to mention soup and salmon” (9). Such conventions omit not only the pleasures of dining, but the roles that anglers, cooks, servants and tradespeople play in bringing food to the Oxbridge table. Woolf’s salmon signify on multi-discursive levels in *A Room of One’s Own*. She invites the careful reader to recall the gendered double standard that salmon invoke in “The Plumage Bill” and the fly-fishing debate.

Further research might investigate salmon and gender politics across Woolf’s other works. In *Between the Acts*, Isabella meets her husband while fishing: ‘Her line had got tangled; she had given over, and had watched him […] she loved him’ (44). Likewise, Lady Bradshaw, “caught salmon freely” while fishing: ‘Her line had got tangled; she had given over, and had watched him […]’ (74) into her *A Room of One’s Own*.

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—as it may be—

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“(for she was with him)”: Lucrezia Warren Smith as Witness and Scribe in *Mrs. Dalloway*

As Septimus Warren Smith sits beneath the trees of Regent’s Park, held in thrall to yet another manically poetic-prophetic rapture, he can just dimly hear a single voice calling out to him through his chorus of psychopompous sparrows. Disembodied, it commands: “Look, the unseen bade him, the voice which now communicated with him who was the greatest of mankind” (Woolf 25). This unseen speaker is, of course, Septimus’s wife Lucrezia, whom the majority of critics analyzing Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* have placed in a similarly mediate position. Rezia is variously taken to serve as an access point between Septimus the traumatized veteran and a paternalist order that drives him to suicide, between Septimus the modernist man and a more sympathizing reader, or else between Septimus the poet and a material world that is growing increasingly, unenly abtract around him. Less, however, is said about ways in which the narrative makes Rezia an access point between Septimus and himself, or at least the psychological injury that has so violently rearranged his sense of self as to be indistinguishable from it. When Rezia is read against these more traditional interpretations of her character—readings centered on her passivity, her supposed collusion with Holmes and Bradshaw, or her simple ignorance—she instead becomes a translator and co-author for Septimus’s tormented, modernist poetic experimentations; and by taking final guardianship of Septimus’s poetry, Rezia also allows her husband to achieve a bittersweet triumph over his trauma and the fractured, ever-elusive language in which he attempts to describe it.

In order to view Rezia’s character through a lens uncolored—or at least less colored—by our own anachronistic understandings of post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly where those understandings influence our reception of Septimus and his condition, it is necessary to first examine contemporary studies of shell-shock and its perceived causes. Sue Thomas contextualizes Septimus Smith’s character by analyzing the British War Office Committee’s 1922 enquiry into shell-shock, which reported on its prominence among former WWI soldiers and recommended various interventions. Thomas cites similarities between the treatment of veterans and the equally ineffective methods often used on female hysteria patients, revealing common denominators of temperance, self-governance, and willpower as prevailing middle class ideals; if one could only try hard enough, went the reasoning, and was not indulged or pandered to, such disorders could eventually be overcome. The 1922 enquiry also recommends “the minimization of sympathy for the patient…which tacitly legitimizes the symptoms as an illness” (Thomas 54). Because Rezia acts as a well-intentioned but damaging agent for prurcute notions of stoic British masculinity, denying—embarrassingly, angrily—that there is anything the matter with her husband, she “cuts off Septimus’ avenue of communication with Sir William Bradshaw by preempting his admission of having failed to preserve his humanity in war” (Thomas 56). According to Thomas, Woolf is using both Septimus’s struggle and Rezia’s repressive denial of it to condemn the cultural norms that silenced traumatized men and barred them from the process of psychological healing through self-expression.

Karen DeMeester’s “Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*” also makes avenues of communication a critical element for recovery, and connects trauma to the modernist narrative form itself. The modernist novel centers on fragmentation, distortion, and the destruction of stabilized meaning; trauma, in correspondent ways, breaks down one’s earlier ideologies and sense(s) of self, giving the impression of being somehow beyond the powers of language to comprehend or control. Both psychological trauma and the modernist narrative form create barriers against productive, restabilizing modes of self-expression, which would otherwise allow a trauma victim such as Septimus to articulate his experiences, find validation in another person, and move towards recovery. Septimus’s suicide is one last attempt to

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speak,” defying “society’s refusal to let him give meaning to that [his psychological pain]” (DeMeester 653), where society is represented by Dr. Holmes, Sir William Bradshaw, and Rezia. Kathryn Van Wert also accepts that various communicative barriers lie at the root of Septimus’s disorder, but uses excerpts from Woolf’s earlier draft “The Hours” to argue that this struggle is an inherent part of Septimus’s identity as an unrecognized poet, rather than a direct consequence of his trauma. His psychological injury, and his desire to exist in a pre-symbolic world that is unmediated by language, are “continuous with a lifelong inability to fit his experiences into available genres, and the attendant horror that without formal expression, feeling must fade” (Van Wert 78). Rezia here becomes a victim of this articulation-versus-abstraction process, since Septimus’s lack of feeling for her indicates that he cannot find formal expression for her either; he cannot “speak” her into specificity. She is yet another feature of an external world that exists to confound Septimus’s traumatized, thwarted desires for masterful symbolic representation.

Kaley Joyes’ “Failed Witnessing in Virginia Woolf” responds directly to DeMeester’s argument and indirectly to the notions of failed self-expression outlined by Van Wert. Joyes believes that we must not take Septimus’s failed recovery for a shortcoming of the novel, or of the modernist form; it is integral to Woolf’s critique of post-war British culture, as described by Thomas, and of the “failed witnessing” performed by characters like Rezia, who refuses to hear or receive Septimus’s trauma narrative for what it really is. The novel does offer a faint possibility of healing communication between husband and wife, and Joyes reads the hat Septimus and Rezia make together as an analog for dialogic production—“the Smiths’ collaboration parallels witnessing” (Joyes 76)—although of course all progress is forestalled by Septimus’s death. Joyes identifies Rezia’s rush to the window as her “last independent act in the novel” (Joyes 79) before she fades into silence. Septimus’ suicide, meanwhile, his impalement on the iron spikes of Mrs. Filmer’s fence, turns him into either a failed Christ figure whose death does not achieve salvation (Bethea 251), or else a tragic Shakespearean hero felled by a fatal flaw within society rather than within his own character (Mauk 345). At best, then, Rezia’s love and her misguided efforts are insufficient to save her husband from destruction; at worst she is seen as betraying him to Holmes, to Bradshaw’s gods of Proportion and Conversion, handing him over to the mercy of society and thus becoming implicitly responsible for his death.

Within each reading, there is an underlying recognition of trauma as something that can and should be spoken about, brought into language and given a more manageable, comprehensible dimension. We are able to observe, diagnose, and describe psychological experiences for which Virginia Woolf, her contemporaries, and her characters all lacked similarly clinical terms. Woolf herself, in fact, wrote on this attenuated capacity of language whenever it is called upon to describe illness, and argued the need for a literature that engages with illness as a complex, transformative human experience on par with love, grief, or hatred. Illness causes us to confront the physical body as an insurmountable medium between the self and the world, but also draws us up into that private, transcendental space found only at the topmost edges of fever-dreams or within the deepest hollows of chronic pain. The common schoolgirl might turn to Donne or Shakespeare for assistance if she is feeling romantic, “but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor, and language at once runs dry” (Woolf 15). The “sudden, fitful, intense” (Woolf 22) nature of illness has an even further power to disrupt perception and fragment language:

In illness words seem to possess a mystic quality. We grasp what is beyond their surface meaning, gather instinctively this, that, and the other—a sound, a colour, here a stress, there a pause—which the poet, knowing words to be meagre in comparison with ideas, has striven about his page to evoke….Foreigners, to whom the tongue is strange, have us at a disadvantage. The Chinese must know better the sound of Anthony and Cleopatra than we do (23 – 24).

Psychological injury caused by trauma—rooted within the mind, yet demonstrating the pathophysiology of a physical illness—seems uniquely suited for this venture beyond the “surface” of language. Septimus cannot convey his narrative to a witness, at least not in the way Thomas, DeMeester, and Joyes all indicate he must, because the exact terms for his pain exist neither in medicine nor daily speech. He cannot rely upon salvation through metaphor, either, according to Van Wert, because poetic expression has also failed him; Septimus has always been tormented by the gap between language and his sensory, emotional, direct experiences with the world. It is this same deficiency of language—rather than her passivity, her ignorance, or her static marginalization—that principally dictates Rezia’s response(s) to Septimus, and it becomes almost as much of a struggle for her as for him.

For when Rezia expresses her denial, “For he was not ill. Dr. Homes said there was nothing the matter with him” (Woolf 23), she speaks partially from an understanding that to acknowledge otherwise would mean accepting the implicit convictions of cowardice and weakness she once trusted, later assuring Septimus that “They could not lie. She undergoes a dynamic conversion, turning against the paternalist wisdom she once trusted, later assuring Septimus that “They could not separate them against their wills” (Woolf 144). Rezia’s driving desire throughout the narrative is to be her husband’s advocate and helpmate; what she lacks is the appropriate language and therefore the framework of understanding in which to do so meaningfully, knowing that her husband has become a stranger without knowing how to recover him. Faced with this paucity of formal expression, and with the prospect of separation, Rezia can only transform her language of isolation—“I am alone! I am alone!” (Woolf 23)—into the plural, solitary pronouns of they, them, their. It is a paradoxically devastating consolidation that just before he falls, Septimus—who has also previously thought “So he was deserted” (Woolf 90)—can acknowledge that his wife is truly with him in understanding. Both Septimus and Rezia are confronted by this gap between the human experience of trauma and its spoken or written expression, between pre-symbolic meaning and language; and both are able, together, to explore this tension through poetry.

Although Van Wert and DeMeester discuss Septimus as a poet in terms of identity, they pay somewhat less attention to the actual poetry and artistry his narrative produces. Vera Neverow’s “Septimus Smith, Modernist War Poet” examines this radical post-impressionist poetry presented to us by “the muse-like omniscient narrator who sifts through the workings of Septimus’s mind and gives us intermittent access to his creativity” (Neverow 61). When broken into lines of poetry, the cadences and motifs of Septimus’s thoughts evoke Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and Wilfred Owen at turns. He “transmits the voices of the dead themselves, as an oracle from the cleft between life and death that is the site of trauma” (Neverow 63). Septimus is not only expressing his own trauma through the narrative he shares with us, but the trauma common
to a whole butchered generation of men. His frustrated desire for a pre-symbolic mastery of meaning, his existence within the similar cleft between word and world, does not supersede his wartime trauma in any biographical sense, or at least not in the way Van Wert evaluates it. It is instead a modernist poetic conflict—if not the modernist poetic conflict, with modernism being in many ways inseparable from the effects of WWI—that Woolf has taken and made the core of his character. The papers and drawings that Rezia has collected for him reveal “the phantasmagoric range of Septimus’s creativity” (Neverow 63), produced by just this conflict, but also quietly remind us of Rezia’s role in helping to create them.

Rezia’s attraction to Septimus, while possibly attributable to her stereotyped first impressions of him as a manly, self-composed English solider, contain an intellectual element that is less immediately delegable to feminine naiveté. Septimus may struggle with the limits of language, but his wife falls in love with him particularly because he inspires a newfound capacity for radical self-expression within her: “She could say whatever came into her head….Anything, anything that struck her to say she would tell him, and he understood at once. Her own family were not the same” (Woolf 142 – 43). In fact, Rezia is the only other “conscience” in the novel besides Septimus himself who is granted direct, unmediated access to his poetry. Even we, as the readers, are not provided with any quoted excerpts. Rezia transcribes it while Septimus dictates, evoking the classical relationship between a divine, inspiring source and the mortal hand that becomes its agent: “She wrote it down just as he spoke it. Some things were very beautiful; others sheer nonsense” (Woolf 137). Rezia’s ability to recognize the raw phantasmagoric beauty of her husband’s experimental, occasionally incompressible poetry may even be more refined than the ability of Septimus himself, given how she can look at language on a level that is both above and below a native English speaker’s capacities.

Questions concerning why Rezia should be Italian rather than English have often been answered in relation to Septimus’s service on the oft-ignored Italian front, and Woolf’s desire to underscore a larger post-war tradition of forgetfulness as well as sanitized commemoration (Bradshaw 118). Yet Rezia’s identity as a foreign-born speaker also puts her into the classical relationship between a divine, inspiring source and the mortal hand that becomes its agent: “She wrote it down just as he spoke it. Some things were very beautiful; others sheer nonsense” (Woolf 137). Rezia’s ability to recognize the raw phantasmagoric beauty of her husband’s experimental, occasionally incompressible poetry may even be more refined than the ability of Septimus himself, given how she can look at language on a level that is both above and below a native English speaker’s capacities.

Unbeknownst to Rezia, Septimus also performs one last poetic transformation. As he watches his wife bundle up the poetry, Septimus observes: “She was a flowering tree; and through her branches looked out the face of a lawgiver, who had reached a sanctuary where she feared no one; not Holmes; not Bradshaw; a miracle, a triumph” (Woolf 144). The progress of Septimus’s character has been towards an ability to truly see and hear his wife, compared to her the scene in Regent’s Park stands still; the map of the world becomes the meaning of the world; odes to Time, which appears unchanging, fixed, and immortal yet never stands still; the map of the world becomes the meaning of the world; Septimus’s command “burn them!” works as a refrain. The gaps between word and meaning have here been erased, as have the gaps between Septimus’s and Rezia’s minds while studying their dialogic production of a poetic narrative that represents the fragmented experience of trauma. And Rezia, in reply to Septimus’s order, lays her hands upon the work: “She would tie them up (for she had no envelope) with a piece of silk. Even if they took him, she said, she would go with him” (Woolf 144). Rezia then binds up the papers and promises she will put them away, while continuing to declare in her plural-pronoun way that nothing and nobody can separate them. Easily, then, effortlessly, Rezia’s simple action and equally simple language of unity transform Septimus into his own poetry, blurring and negating the distinctions between them. It transports Septimus—in a way his violent suicide alone cannot—into a world above ordinary language, towards which his character has always reached but has never quite been able to grasp. Rezia has neither failed as a witness nor as a wife, and in preserving her husband’s work she both takes on the guardianship of his narrative and provides him with a measure of release. His death will be Holmes’s and Bradshaw’s ideas of a tragedy, Septimus thinks, “not his or Rezia’s (for she was with him)” (Woolf 146).

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“Life Was Good. The Sun Hot.”
Septimus Smith, Sanity, and Suicide

Septimus Smith is a compelling representation of insanity in modern fiction, traversing the depth and despair of mental illness from the startling car horn in the morning to his suicide in the afternoon. Readers and scholars are enticed with this portrayal of mental illness, the distinct contrast between Septimus and Clarissa, the illustration of Septimus as a shell-shocked veteran, and the autobiographical parallels between Septimus and Woolf; however none have read Septimus, his mental illness, and these autobiographical parallels through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin. Viewed through Bakhtin’s theories, Septimus emerges not a tragic character plagued by mental illness and goaded to suicide by voices in his head but rather as the mentally ill character to whom Virginia Woolf offers an escape from the finalizing mental health discourse, allowing the reader to view Septimus’s suicide as a lucid decision.

In September 1913, Leonard Woolf became concerned for Virginia’s mental health during a holiday at Holford where she “slept badly,” ate only “with the greatest difficulty,” and “suffered various delusions” (L. Woolf 154). Leonard’s concern led to his decision to end the holiday early and return to London for a consultation about Virginia’s mental health. Virginia agreed—on conditions: she would choose the doctor, Leonard would stop worrying about her sleeping and eating habits, and he would not bring up a rest home if the doctor did not believe she was ill. In return, she agreed to “accept [the doctor’s] verdict and undergo what treatment he might prescribe” (L. Woolf 155). She chose Dr. Henry Head, a neurologist, and, at the consultation, expressed her belief that she was not ill but that her condition was “due to her own faults” and that “eating and resting made her worse” (L. Woolf 154-55; Dr. Head assured she “was completely mistaken” about her health, agreed with Leonard and prescribed for Woolf “a nursing home” where she would be required to “stay in bed for a few weeks, resting and eating” (L. Woolf 156).

Woolf knew well this method of treatment, having previously undergone three ‘rest cures,’ as the treatment was termed, the last ending only weeks prior to their Holford holiday, and she knew the rest cure as a recurring treatment through which she must suffer, despite her own knowledge that the treatment did not help her recover. Through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories on language, one can see how the diagnosis finalized the rest cure discourse in the Woolf household. Bakhtin theorizes that language is a dialogic construct with each utterance simultaneously responding to previous utterances in the discourse and anticipating future utterances. A speaker finalizes an utterance when he says “everything he wishes to say at a particular moment or under particular circumstances” (“Problem” 76; emphasis in original). Dr. Head thus finalized the discourse regarding Woolf’s mental health by pronouncing her ill enough to need a rest cure and unable to determine her own mental health needs; the pronouncement of her illness brings to an end the current consultation, and the judgment that she does not know her own needs serves to further finalize the current consultation while also anticipating future utterances. In addition, the agreement with Leonard meant, for Woolf, losing all ability to protest the current and any future treatments. Just hours after this consultation, Woolf attempted suicide by overdosing on Veronal (L. Woolf 156).

Suicide attempts were considered a severe symptom of mental illness and, at this time, required that any person threatening or attempting suicide be registered and institutionalized unless a family member volunteered to see to “the peaceable behavior or safe custody” of the suicidal individual (Lunacy Act 2177). Leonard made arrangements with the doctors to allow him to undertake her care and treatment, thus complying with the legal requirements. To ensure the success of the treatment, the Woolfs took up two suburban homes: Hogarth House in Richmond in 1915 and, in 1919, Monk’s House in Rodmell (L. Woolf 76; 61). In these homes, Leonard ensured Virginia lived “a quiet, vegetative life, eating well, going to bed early, and not tiring herself mentally or physically” and, upon any symptoms of her illness, Leonard sent her to bed to “lay doing nothing in a darkened room, drinking large quantities of milk and eating well” until the symptoms subsided “in a week or ten days” (L. Woolf 76). In other words, Leonard provided an at-home rest cure. Leonard sustained this treatment in their suburban home for a decade, though Woolf pleaded on numerous occasions for a respite from the treatment and a return to life in London. By June 1923, she recorded her exasperation at remaining in the suburbs: “the arguments are so well known to me that I can’t bother to write them down” (Diary [D] 2: 249); Leonard objected to the permanent move to London, again citing “the old rigid obstacle—[her] health” (D2: 250), just when Woolf was confident she “could at last go full speed ahead” (D2: 250). The conversation parallels the consultation with Dr. Head a decade earlier: she attempts to convince Leonard she is not ill; Leonard does not believe that she knows her own health; the rest cure continues. Though permitted to read and write when healthy, Virginia finds that the continued life in the suburban rest home setting leaves her “tied, imprisoned, inhibited” (D2: 250), an understandable frustration for a person whose home also served as her institution. The parallel conversation occurred as Woolf was working on Mrs. Dalloway, the novel she planned as “a study of insanity & suicide” (D2: 207), and occurs in the diary at the same time she records working on “the mad part” of the novel (D2: 248). Hence, the autobiographical elements in Septimus’s character are neither shocking nor surprising. Roger Poole contends that autobiographical parallels in Woolf’s novels are her means of “exorcis[ing] key persons and passages from her conscious or unconscious life by writing them fully out” (3); recognizing the parallel timeline of Septimus’s consultation and suicide shows the greater impact of the finalizing discourse.

Poole emphasizes the parallel chronology in Mrs. Dalloway, especially the early conversation between Septimus and Dr. Bradshaw, as a “direct reconstruction of certain passages of the conversation” Virginia had with Dr. Head (Poole 139). Poole emphasizes the reconstruction of passages from Woolf’s own experience, yet the encompassing chronological sequence of Septimus’s appointment with Dr. Bradshaw also aligns with Leonard’s account of the meeting with Dr. Head: Septimus speaks with the doctor, Lucrezia speaks with the doctor, the rest cure is prescribed. When Septimus speaks on his own behalf, he states he has “committed a crime” (V. Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway [MD] 96). Lucrezia immediately rejects this statement, and Dr. Bradshaw ignores the statement entirely; Septimus’s statement about his view of the cause of his problems—a parallel to Woolf’s objection that her problems were her own fault—is not considered by the doctor. Poole accentuates this connection between Septimus and Virginia through the shared rejection of their own accounts of their illness: “the patient’s own view of what was wrong was disconfirmed by ‘experts’ and did not count” (143; emphasis in original). There is no more dialogue between the patient and the doctor about this pronouncement. Instead, Dr. Bradshaw and Lucrezia leave Septimus, continuing the consultation in another room, physically excluding

1 See, for example, Hermione Lee’s The Novels of Virginia Woolf, Sue Thomas’s “Virginia Woolf’s Septimus Smith and Contemporary Perceptions of Shell Shock,” and Manjeet Rathee’s “Virginia Woolf and the Construct of Sanity and Insanity in Mrs. Dalloway.”

2 As Elaine Showalter indicates, the rest cure required patients to rest for extensive periods in darkened rooms with no access to any form of intellectual stimulation, including reading or writing; they were overfed, their weight closely monitored, and they were only permitted to return home after weeks or months, when the doctor decided they were recovered (Showalter 138-39).

3 It is important to note that a parallel sequence of events precedes Virginia’s 1941 suicide. See Hermione Lee’s Virginia Woolf (745-47).

4 This account is taken specifically from Leonard’s autobiography for the first-hand account of the appointment. There is no first-hand account from Virginia; after 1909, she did not begin keeping a diary again until 1915, and there are no letters from this period that discuss the appointment with Dr. Head.
Septimus from the conversation that will determine not only his current treatment, but also the judgment of his mental health. Septimus has no voice in the diagnosis and can only accept the doctor’s pronouncement that he is “very, very ill” and must stay in a rest home “where we will teach you to rest” (V. Woolf MD 97).

Just hours after his diagnosis, Septimus commits suicide. A surface reading of Septimus’s suicide seemingly illustrates the depth of his illness, especially coming after the emphasis on his hallucinations earlier in the novel; however, a closer reading of Septimus’s thought process just moments before he flings himself “violently down on Mrs. Filmer’s area railing” (MD 149) shows a lucid and coherent decision:

he considered Mrs. Filmer’s nice clean bread knife with ‘Bread’ carved on the handle. Ah, but one mustn’t spoil that. The gas fire? but it was too late now. Holmes was coming. Razors he might have got, but Rezia, who always did that sort of thing, had them packed. There remained only the window. (MD 149)

Septimus commits suicide knowing that “Holmes was at the door” (MD 149) and the rest cure inevitable; Holmes is not a hallucination. Septimus knows that Lucrezia, not the dead Evans, blocks Holmes’s entry. There can be no doubt in this moment that Septimus’s decision is that of the rational, coherent individual, not the man plagued by mental illness earlier in the novel. Reading Septimus’s suicide as the decision of a lucid character making his own choice illustrates suicide as the only alternative to submitting to the finalizing diagnosis. Through suicide, Septimus escapes the finalizing diagnosis, and it is important to recognize this decision as a lucid choice to escape a lifetime of finalization, a lifetime of illness, a lifetime of rest. Suicide is the only option, and Woolf makes this clear in the moment when Septimus throws himself from the window: “He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot.” (MD 149). Woolf believed suicide was the only alternative to being finalized, and she writes for her character the only humane conclusion for a person about to be bullied into such treatment.

The parallels between Septimus’s appointment with Dr. Bradshaw and his subsequent suicide and Woolf’s appointment with Dr. Head and her subsequent suicide attempt offer a glimpse into how Woolf perceived the decision of a lucid character making his own choice illustrates suicide as the only alternative to submitting to the finalizing diagnosis. Through suicide, Septimus escapes the finalizing diagnosis, and it is important to recognize this decision as a lucid choice to escape a lifetime of finalization, a lifetime of illness, a lifetime of rest. Suicide is the only option, and Woolf makes this clear in the moment when Septimus throws himself from the window: “He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot.” (MD 149). Woolf believed suicide was the only alternative to being finalized, and she writes for her character the only humane conclusion for a person about to be bullied into such treatment.

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Since June, I have also found myself returning to a passage from one of Woolf’s early journals. Written in 1903, and taken from an entry titled “A Dance in Queen’s Gate,” it describes how, as music wafts into her bedroom from a ball down the street, Woolf is overcome by the impulse to dance. “That is the quality which dance music has—no other,” she writes. “It stirs some barbaric instinct—lulled asleep in our sober lives—you forget centuries of civilization in a second, & yield to that strange passion which sends you madly whirling round the room” (Passionate Apprentice [PA] 165). The “dance music” that Woolf was referring to was “the swing & the lilt” (Pf 165) of the waltz, although her description also evokes—however improbably and anachronistically—the singular experience of dancing at a gay nightclub. As the passage continues, for instance, Woolf reflects:

It is as though some swift current of water swept you along with it. It is magic music. Here the bars run low, passionate, regretful, but always in the same pulse. We dance as though we knew the vanity of dancing. We dance to drown our sorrows—but dance, dance—If you

1 Another tragic act of violence occurred in the early evening of the first day of the Woolf conference, when MP Jo Cox, who represented the Batley and Spen constituency, was shot and stabbed to death by a far-right terrorist, Thomas Mair. Mair has since been sentenced to life in prison for his crime.
stop you are lost. This one night we will be mad—dance lightly—raise our hearts as the beat strengthens, grows buoyant—careless, defiant. What matters anything so long as one step is in time—so long as one’s whole body & mind are dancing too—what shall end it? (Pa 165)

If on the one hand, this description beautifully captures a kind of weightless joy, it also expresses something about dance that is deeply mournful. That intermingling of pleasure and melancholy seems to capture what it is about dance that has tied it so intimately to queer history. Against the prohibitions of life outside, out there, the gay nightclub has always been built around the kind of transient thrill that Woolf describes: “This one night we will be mad.” As much as that declaration signals a form of ecstatic release, it is also a reminder that queer experiences of happiness are so often bounded and contingent. The kind of freedom that Woolf describes is a limited one, which can only exist when we “forget” reality, and all its enduring proscriptions, and “yield” to the pleasures of the immediate. Woolf acknowledges that this can be a form of denial—simply a way for us to “drown our sorrows.” And yet, she also understood that sometimes this is the very thing that sustains us: “But dance, dance”—she says, “If you stop you are lost.” For Woolf then, dance was not just about fantasy or vanity. Instead, it’s “careless”; carefree disregard was also precisely what made it defiant.

That defiance, though, has its limits. The nightclub in Orlando that was attacked in June received its name from one of its co-owners, Barbara Poma, whose brother died of AIDS in 1991. “Pulse” was meant to denote his continuing heartbeat, although it also signals the life force of dance in the face of loss: “Here the bars run low, passionate, regretful, but always in the same pulse.” If that word holds within it the promise of endurance, it also contains the threat of cessation. “What shall end it?” Woolf asks. From one perspective, this question evinces total disbelief that the thrill of dance could ever end. From another, it rings a panicked note of inevitability.

“To be ec-static,” Judith Butler writes in Undoing Gender, “means, literally, to be outside oneself, and this can have several meanings: to be transported beyond oneself by a passion, but also to be beside oneself with rage or grief” (20). In modern queer history, dance has often been structured by this double meaning. Pulse is merely one in a long succession of queer venues that have been targeted or attacked in the last century and certainly not just in the United States. If gay nightclubs enable escape and fantasy from the lived experiences of violence and homophobia, they have also been the sites where the interruption of real life makes itself known most painfully. To keep returning—to “raise our hearts as the beat strengthens”—represents both the struggle and the consolation of those spaces.

In her contribution to the 2012 volume Virginia Woolf in Context, Judith Allen observed: “As we establish new contexts for reading Woolf’s writings, we reinvigorate them, make them relevant in new ways” (202). That is perhaps what any of us do when we turn to Woolf’s work in moments of crisis; we make it new; and newly essential, by repositioning it where it does the most work for us. That is also, of course, how Woolf thought about language. In her late essay “Craftsmanship” (1937) she reflected on the way words collect and accumulate meaning over time. “Now, this power of suggestion is one of the most mysterious properties of words,” she writes. “Everyone who has ever written a sentence must be conscious or half-conscious of it. Words, English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of associations—naturally” (129). “Orlando” was already a queer kind of word before Woolf appropriated it for her novel of the same name. If, as Eve Sedgwick famously observed, queerness points to an “open mesh of possibilities” (8), then “Orlando” gestures, quite literally, to conjunction, enclosing within it the potentiality of “and” and “or.” Woolf added to it a further citation on the possibilities of sex and gender in Orlando, as well as a sense of the joyous, romping experience of queer life. Mixed together with that citation now is a new set of echoes, memories, and associations. These point not to pleasure but to fear and violence—wholly different, and yet inseparable parts of queer experience.

In November of 1928, less than a month after the publication of Orlando, Woolf wrote in her diary: “I am rather headachy, & dimly obscured with sleeping draught. This is the aftermath (what does that mean?—Trench, whom I open idly apparently says nothing) of Orlando” (D3 201). The “Trench” she refers to is Richard Chenevix Trench, who, in 1859, compiled A Select Glossary of English Words Used Formerly in Senses Different from Their Present. The word that Woolf looked up—“aftermath”—today means “a period or state of affairs following a significant event, esp. when that event is destructive or harmful” (“Aftermath,” def. 2a). Its oldest definition, though—the one that Woolf would have been looking for in Trench’s book—meant “a second crop or new growth of grass...after the first has been mown or harvested” (“Aftermath,” def. 1). The etymology implies a declining emphasis on regeneration, and an increasing focus on loss. But, as Woolf insisted in “Craftsmanship,” words that were “used formerly in senses different from their present” do not lose their earlier meanings. Rather, they “combine unconsciously together” (129). If today “Orlando” is a word that belongs to a queer history of loss, hidden just beneath its surface are the associations of “Orlando” as Woolf introduced it to us—a word full of possibility and playfulness.

“It is as though some swift current of water swept you along with it”—reading that sentence now, one is perhaps reminded of the circumstances of Woolf’s death in 1941. It also, however, evokes a passage from The Waves (1931), where Rhoda, having heard of Percival’s death, walks by the river and watches the ships sailing for India “bowling down the tide.” “A woman walks on deck with a dog barking round her,” she says. “Her skirts are blown; her hair is blown; they are going out to sea; they are leaving us; they are vanishing this summer evening” (108).

For queer communities, no less for Latino communities, it has been difficult to know how to grieve for Orlando, especially in a year that was full of loss and grievance for so many. Woolf’s answer, I think, would involve rededicating ourselves to pleasure. In “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,” she writes: “If we were free we should be out in the open, dancing, at the play, or sitting at the window talking together” (155). And so in grief and defiance, we “raise our hearts” and “dance lightly” into the night: If we stop we are lost.

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Works Cited


2 Here, a nod to the words of another modernist, Ezra Pound.
In Part 2, Forrester delves into the Stephen family, focusing primarily on Virginia’s father, Leslie. She tells the familiar story of his histriomachia and dependence on his daughter after their mother’s death but extrapolates further. At this point, I felt like I needed a bath as Forrester presents the Stephen household as “a crypt” (91), a cesspool awash in death, despair, hysteria, and near-incest. She draws certain conclusions from Woolf’s own writing, as when Woolf describes as “illicit” in “A Sketch of the Past” the scarifying Wednesdays of her young adulthood, when Vanessa presented the weekly accounts to Leslie and then withstood his barrage of verbal abuse. Forrester questions Woolf’s choice of the word “illicit.” These Wednesdays “could arouse indignation, fear, outrage, but they do not correspond to the feelings of intense threat and convulsive panic Virginia records, the memory alone making her recoil, suffocated, ravaged by the horror, decades later—and less than six months before her death” (87). In Forrester’s view, the word “illicit” indicates something lurking below the surface that the family was never permitted to acknowledge. “Thus what is silenced emerges in silence,” Forrester writes: “the insidious threat of incest suffered by Stella when she was alive, which Virginia had guessed” (88).

I grew impatient with certain aspects of Portrait. Forrester engages in the kind of speculation for which she criticizes Bell. She finds irrational Woolf’s comment that her father’s death freed her for a life of writing, “because Leslie never stood in the way of the books or the writing, quite the opposite” (110)—yet a few pages later, she says Virginia and her siblings were “saved, liberated [by Leslie’s death] from an insipid and deadening future” (116). She dismisses Woolf’s entire body of literary criticism as “dull and scholarly” (157). And she sees, everywhere, harbingers of the suicide by drowning. Sara and North’s conversation in The Years about “the Jew in the bath,” Forrester writes, “stops abruptly, interrupted by the sound of water. The water than runs throughout Virginia’s work, as though pointing the way to the River Ouse” (53). A story Virginia writes at age seventeen constitutes “one of the first signs (not the first) of an obsession with water, a fascination for drowning. One of the first steps toward the River Ouse” (106). When Vanessa and Clive decide to continue living at 46 Gordon Square after their marriage, forcing Virginia and Adrian to find their own place, “Virginia says nothing about it. […] She does not waver, she moves on. As she always does. The last step will be into the River Ouse” (119)—and so on.

Often, however, what at first seem like improbable assumptions are persuasively borne out by Forrester’s exhaustive knowledge of Woolf’s and her circle’s diaries and letters, not to mention several personal conversations with Quentin Bell, along with her ability to connect and analyze seemingly unrelated factors. I also appreciated learning more about Adrian than ever before, about whom Forrester writes with great compassion—the young boy left out in the cold upon Julia’s death, disliked by his siblings throughout his life. Forrester also shares insights into Vanessa’s character and comments perceptively on Woolf’s most important female friendships.

I alternated between wanting to throw the book across the room and eagerly following Forrester down unforeseen paths into new interpretations of these bygone events. In the end, I’m not sure what kind of portrait emerges of Woolf. Forrester disparages the Leonard-and-Quentin-concocted myth and places in its stead a woman besieged from all sides all her life. Perhaps, then, we can marvel even more at the magnificent body of work Woolf produced. This book should not be anyone’s first foray into Woolf’s life story, but for those familiar with its contours, it presents a thought-provoking portrait of the artist that strives to capture her fiercely strong life force pitted against impossible—if not improbable—odds.

What a lark, then, what a plunge it was to go from Forrester’s Portrait to Library of Luminaries: Virginia Woolf: An Illustrated Biography, with
hand-written text by Zena Alkayat and colorful illustrations by Nina Cosford. At just 128 pages, the minimalist approach of this delightful 6”x6” book, with its embossed cover and thick, creamy pages, captures key elements of the biography while interspersing lines from the diaries, letter, and novels. A two-page spread early on, for example, features a gorgeous illustration of the sea, lighthouse, and two silhouetted figures standing on a rocky shore at sundown, with prose on the left-hand page seamlessly blending Woolf’s life and writing: “Happiest during family holidays to Talland House in St. Ives, Virginia adored playing cricket and was an ace bowler. She also loved to listen to the waves breaking—one two, one two—and take long coastal walks with her father.” Several pages later, of the move to 46 Gordon Square, we read, “Over the years, the nebulous Bloomsbury Group became shorthand for an unconventional and nonconformist set of friends,” with text accompanied by a simple drawing of a cigarette in an ashtray. An Illustrated Biography places Woolf’s life in historical context as well, citing the Suffrage Movement, the avant-garde, Roger Fry’s 1910 post-impressionist exhibition, the two World Wars, and so on, not merely as backdrop but as markers of Woolf’s keen awareness and incorporation into her writing of the complex world around her. The book is impressive for its own awareness and understanding of important nuances in Woolf’s life and works. (In her acknowledgements, Alkayat expresses her debt to Alexandra Harris’s and especially to Hermione Lee’s biography of Woolf.)

I love the whimsy of the book as well, such as text reading, “A beauty like her mother, Virginia also looked rather eccentric. Her hair pins often fell loose and she was self-conscious about dressing up,” with an illustration of the back of Woolf’s head—what appears to be the Beresford bun—slightly disheveled and with a hair pin springing loose. Later comes a wonderful two-page spread of “Virginia’s Desk,” with small, colorful, lovely drawings of a “photo of Julia,” “pen pot,” “diary,” “reading glasses,” “manuscript,” “lamp from Vanessa,” “pen & ink,” and “sweets.” The following page demonstrates the fruits of Woolf’s labor: a small drawing of the Vanessa Bell dustjacket for Mrs. Dalloway with the line, “Mrs. Dalloway—an ambitious, adventurous experiment in form—was published in 1925,” and a single sentence on the following page: “Fiction was never the same again.”

An Illustrated Biography is an evocative, informative, and aesthetically beautiful book, perfect as a supplement to the full biography, a lovely addition to our collections of Woolfiana, or a gift to readers of Woolf or to anyone appreciative of perceptively drawn literary lives. There are currently four such illustrated biographies from Chronicle Books (of Woolf, Jane Austen, Frida Kahlo, and Coco Chanel). I hope there are plans for future volumes as well.

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REVIEW
WOOLF: A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

Writing a short guide to any author about whom many volumes have been written is daring and treacherous work. In Woolf: A Guide for the Perplexed, Kathryn Simpson provides an impressive overview of critical takes on Woolf’s writing as well as essential lessons about her techniques and cultural contexts.

She divides the book into seven sections: “Introduction,” “Woolf’s Modernism,” “Formal Innovation,” “Narrative Technique,” “Characterization,” “Gender, Sexuality and Class,” and finally, “Empire and Jewishness.” The organization suggests that one of the perplexed might dive into the text at any point to find answers to his or her questions. For example, if he were interested in Woolf’s innovations with narration, he could dip into “Narrative Technique,” and read short sections on “Narrators and narration,” “Free indirect discourse,” or “Stream of consciousness.” If she wanted to know more about Woolf’s reactions to empire, the last chapter offers short sections on “Empire and imperialism,” “Colonial encounters,” and “Critique of Empire” as well as segments on specific works and events with imperial themes: The Voyage Out, Between the Acts, Three Guineas, The Years and the Dreadnought Hoax. Because each section is short—never more than a few pages—the book invites such dipping in. Simpson’s citations make sure that any reader who wants to find out more can locate articles and books that explore the topics more fully.

Reading about a specific work takes just a little extra effort because one title may be discussed in several places. For example, one can find a discussion of Charles Tansley, Mrs. McNab and World War I in “Gender, Sexuality and Class,” while one would look to “Narrative Technique” to read an analysis of form and style in To the Lighthouse.

Woolf scholars will be familiar with most of the arguments presented here. Of the problems with the guide genre in general is that scholars will yearn for more detail and more nuance when it comes to their favorite issues and themes. Still, one of my favorite parts of the guide was the “Empire” section of the “Introduction” where Simpson offers a clear, concise outline of Woolf’s abolitionist family tree and her contract with colonial writers through Leonard Woolf’s work and the Hogarth Press. Scholars with other interests are sure to find similar gems.

Simpson favors positive readings of Woolf and underplays her weaknesses and prejudices. I found this most evident in her section on race. While Simpson does address Woolf’s complex representations of Jews—it will remain ever perplexing to read her anti-Semitic remarks when one knows she loved and married a Jewish man—she completely overlooks Woolf’s bigotry toward Africans. While working on a recent project, I discovered that the South African political activists Pixley ka Isaka Seme and Alfred Mangena—who would later establish the African National Congress—lived in Fitzroy Square at the same time Woolf did (see Green 151). Yet, just a few years after being neighbors with such accomplished, principled men, she wrote “so home, passing a nigger gentleman, perfectly fitted out in swallow tail & bowler & gold headed cane; & what were his thoughts? Of the degradation stamped on him?” (Woolf 23). Tragically, this was a prevalent attitude in the period.

The urge to represent Woolf in the most favorable light in this kind of guide is understandable, but I think, even in an introductory guide, a few more critical assessments would have created a more rounded, complex picture of her and her work.

Simpson’s knowledge of Woolf scholarship is impressive, but her book does not feel particularly inviting for the genuinely perplexed. Its tone is academic and its narrative maintains a scholarly distance. I can’t help but think that a more personal narrative voice, one that not only presents information but provides a perspective for understanding it would have been more appealing for the common reader. However, I can imagine professors using this guide in their undergraduate classes to lay the groundwork for more nuanced discussions or debates about critical perspectives. I can also see graduate students or non-specialists turning to its pages for a good overview of Woolf studies and mining its bibliography for further reading.

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When a volume of collected essays appears with the title *Virginia Woolf: Twenty-First-Century Approaches*, one wonders. Will it actually offer new ways to look at Woolf? Will its approach be accessible to a wide audience—from the scholar to the common reader? Will its content provide inspiration for one’s own thinking and writing about this twentieth-century Modernist author?

This book, a collection of eleven newly commissioned essays edited by Jeanne Dubino, Gill Lowe, Vara Neverow, and Kathryn Simpson, meets the challenge. One reason may be because it was inspired by recent scholarship. The papers presented at the Twenty-first Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf: Contradictory Woolf, as well as the volume of *Selected Papers* published afterwards by Clemson University Digital Press, prompted the collection, which includes essays by all four of its editors. The volume’s essays are divided into five interconnected subject areas that move from the inward to the outward. They are: Self and Identity; Language and Translation; Culture and Commodification; Human, Animal, and Nonhuman; and Genders, Sexualities, and Multiplicities. Within each area, the authors manage to provide new material and new readings of Woolf that connect with a diverse audience, while also offering inspiration to both academic and common readers. As a bonus, the Introduction to the volume offers scholarly sources for each topic area that go beyond those listed in the Notes and Bibliography for each essay.

Readers of Woolf who have studied her diaries will appreciate Gill Lowe’s essay under the Self and Identity heading, “I am fast locked up,” Janus and Miss Jan: Virginia Woolf’s 1897 Journal as Threshold Text.” It explores Woolf’s approach to her first personal journal in terms of how much of herself she reveals, or “unlocks,” and the writing style she adapts in making those revelations. This includes her use of the “mask” of Miss Jan, her fictional mouthpiece, to share details her daily life while simultaneously appearing but not appearing” in the text (22).

In “Elusive Encounters: Seeking out Virginia Woolf in Her Commemorative House Museum,” Nuala Hancock explores another aspect of Self and Identity through her discussion of a topic familiar to anyone who has made a literary pilgrimage to such sites as Monk’s House, Haworth, or Shakespeare’s garden. One interesting feature of this essay is how Hancock uses Woolf’s own words to describe the places themselves, along with her mixed feelings—of voyeurism and of reverence for them as repositories of clues to the lives of the writers who once inhabited them. Another is her detailed description of the topography of Monk’s House and her timeline of the history of the home and its furnishings, both during and after the Woolfs’ occupancy. She then describes the way the home was set as a stage for the Woolfs’ lives together after the National Trust acquired the property. These facts related to the physical property mesh with Hancock’s—and Woolf’s—musings on the concepts of absence and presence in authors’ homes and in life itself.

In the Language and Translation section, Diane Gillespie sheds new light on modernist cultural controversies and discussions in “‘Can I Help You?’: Virginia Woolf, Viola Tree and the Hogarth Press.” In her essay, Gillespie discusses Tree’s book in tandem with Woolf’s *Three Guineas*, presenting both as self-help books, thus dropping *Three Guineas* into a new genre. In the same section, Claire Davison looks at Woolf’s reading of foreign literatures outside their native territory in her essay, “Bilinguals and Biopics: Virginia Woolf and the Outlandishness of Translation.” In this essay she takes a new approach, arguing that Woolf’s “outlandishness” can be found in the nuances discovered by the non-native reader as they read foreign works through a transformative lens.

Essays on Culture and Commodification appear in section three, in the form of the motor-car and Woolf’s Jewishness. In “‘Unity—Dispersity’: Virginia Woolf and the Contradictory Motif of the Motor-Car,” Ann Martin takes up the car in Woolf’s personal writing and her fiction, as well as within modernism itself. She describes Woolf as having an evolving relationship with cars and the ways they impact the countryside, concepts of class, and feelings of community. Kathryn Simpson takes on Woolf’s conflicting and controversial views of Jewishness—from her belief in her own outsider status as the wife of a Jew—to her blatant anti-Semitism. To this end, in “‘Am I a Jew?’: Woolf’s 1930s Political and Economic Peregrinations,” Simpson examines a set of interrelated personal, political, and economic anxieties, tied to the figure of the Jew, that peaked for Woolf in the 1930s. These include her conflicted relationship with money.

The Human, Animal, and Non-Human section includes an essay by Jeanne Dubino, “The Bispecies Environment: Coevolution and *Flush.*” In it, Dubino interrogates cross-species relationships, as they are indicated by feelings and behavior, in *Flush.* She shows how Woolf depicts the domestic and wild spheres as gendered, just as ecofeminists do. But she also illustrates the ways Woolf weaves the webs of those spheres together to create a layered, connected world. In “Posthumanist Interludes: Ecology and Ethology in *The Waves*,” Derek Ryan makes a similar connection. He discusses Woolf’s 1931 novel as a drawing of the natural world, with its ten interludes signifying the links between the formal, political, and ecological in her writing. He pays particular attention to the ways the characters notice nature and the way Woolf fills the interludes with probing and anthropomorphic descriptions of nonhuman life.

Three essays make up the Genders, Sexualities, and Multiplicities section, and it should be no surprise that two of them discuss *Orlando.* In “Indecency: *Jacob’s Room*, Modernist Homosexuality, and the Culture of War,” the first of the three essays, Eileen Barrett does what the title promises. She ties the systemic suppression of male homoerotic relationships to the militaristic atmosphere that created the Great War. In “Multiple Anonymities: Resonances of Fielding’s *The Female Husband in *Orlando* and *A Room of One’s Own*,” Vara Neverow makes a new connection between Fielding’s obscure 1746 pamphlet and Woolf’s work. Neverow argues that Woolf may have adapted the narrative and stylistic elements of Fielding’s pamphlet for both of her works. Kristin Czarnecki sheds new light on the androgynous nature of Orlando in “Two Spirits and Gender Variance in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* and Louise Erdrich’s *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*” by discussing the novel in terms of Native American gender traditions. In particular, she focuses on the tradition of the two-spirit, which allows Orlando to shift gender in a purposeful manner.

This collection is notable for bringing together a diverse body of work from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It presents new ideas about Woolf and new connections to those who came before—and after—her. By
by Christopher Reed. It provides further evidence for this intense antagonism towards the Bloomsbury Group and does so in extreme detail. Reed, in his current prefatory comments provides a reaview glimpse of the heated passions of that era, offering a brief personal reflection on his own essay in the context of the rise of queer studies. In the first sentence, he states, “When ‘Bloomsbury Bashing’ appeared in 1991, I joked that it was all the mean footnotes from my dissertation strung together” (36). As Freud has taught us, most jokes are infused with truth, and I think Reed’s observation is quite accurate. His in-depth engagement with specific works is truly combative. His antagonists include Charles Harrison (English Art and Modernism, 1981), Gertrude Himmelfarb (Marriage and Morals among the Victorians, 1986), Hilton Kramer (“Bloomsbury Idols,” 1984, and “Modernism and Its Enemies,” 1986) and Jane Marcus (including “No More Horses: Virginia Woolf on Art and Propaganda,” 1977; “Thinking Back Through Our Mothers,” 1981; and “Liberty, Sorority, Misogyny,” 1986).

In “Camp Sites: Forster and the Biographies of Queer Bloomsbury,” George Piggford draws on the arguments presented in Christopher Reed’s “Bloomsbury Bashing” in establishing his own approach. Piggford situates his argument in the context of scholarly investigations of Bloomsbury by Judith Scherer Herz, Perry Meisel, S. P. Rosenbaum, and Christopher Reed. Piggford also notes that “Reed’s assessment, which focuses on the influence of the aesthetic tradition (Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde) and of sexological theories (J. A. Symonds, Edward Carpenter) on the group, moves toward a construction of what I would like to term “Queer Bloomsbury” (70). In the essay, Piggford offers very close readings of camp elements in the works of Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and, of course, E. M. Forster.

Bill Maurer in his preface revisits his 2002 essay, “Redecorating the International Economy: Keynes, Grant and the Queering of Bretton Woods,” which was abridged for the volume. Maurer’s argument focuses on “the queerness of John Maynard Keynes economics through a recuperation of his aesthetics” (90). He argues that G. E. Moore’s Principia Ethica played a key influence in Keynes’ economic theory and that elements of Duncan Grant’s creative expression can be aligned in intriguing ways with Keynes’ arguments.

Brenda Helt, in “Passionate Debates on ‘Odious Subjects’: Bisexuality and Woolf’s Opposition to Theories of Androgyny and Sexual Identity,” originally published in 2010 and abridged for this collection, explores Woolf’s complex views involving identity, sexuality and desire. Helt carefully untangles and traces these concepts and the debates that they triggered through the evolving lenses of Woolf’s published work, including A Room of One’s Own and Orlando, as well as through selected memoirs, short essays, diaries and letters. Drawing on the work of Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Lilian Faderman, Martha Vicinus, and Sharon Marcus, Helt invokes the “long tradition in Great Britain and the United States of positive understandings of women’s intimate affective and often sexual relationships with other women” (118). Helt observes that, “[i]n the work of 1920s, Woolf depicts the eroticism of [...] women’s intimate friendships […] and promotes them as more desirable than exclusively homo- or hetero-sexual relationships” (114). Further, she contends that Woolf “frames same-sex desire and sexuality as common, ordinary, harmonious with women’s desire for and sexual

The Bloomsbury Group is also sometimes referenced as the Bloomsbury Set, but that term tends to be used by those who are averse to the Bloomsbury culture.

Helt also designed the cover of the volume. The triangles and squares allude to the now-iconic Bloomsbury phrase “lived in squares, loved in triangles” that appears vertically on the back cover of the book.

Oddly, Adrienne Rich’s highly relevant “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” is not mentioned in this relatively recent article, and Jane Marcus’s work, such as her “Sapphistry: Narration as Lesbian Seduction,” which focuses on both A Room of One’s Own in its exploration of intimacy and support within women’s communities is also missing, though such an omission may have been influenced by Christopher Reed’s and George Piggford’s “Masonic bashing.”
relations with men, and even useful in achieving marital bliss” by “disentang[ing] bisexual desire from androgyny and sexual identity” (115).

Part Two begins with Regina Marler’s “The Bloomsbury Love Triangle,” an engaging and playful supplement to her book-length *Bloomsbury Pies*. The first paragraph is devoted to a reflection on the origin of the Bloomsbury tag line, “They lived in squares and loved in triangles.” Marler notes that, “Almost no Bloomsbury book review is complete without it, no broadcast, no dramatisation, no web page. Before it, journalists just fell back on how snobbish and effete they were, those pesky Bloomsberries, how un-British, how untalented, how queer-seeming (before Michael Holyroyd’s biography of Lytton Strachey) and then (afterwards) how certainly, damnably queer” (136). In an endnote, Marler indicates that she has verified that Dorothy Parker did not coin the term and also states that the witticism was probably the work of Kingsley Martin.7 Marler’s essay evocatively traces these many tangled, intimate triangles that proliferated and morphed over the years, and she infuses them with nuanced emotional richness. (A reference to the BBC Radio 4 sitcom *Gloomsbury* in this essay could have been an amusing addition.)

In “Duncan Grant and Charleston’s Queer Arcadia,” Darren Clarke, now Head of Collections, Research and Exhibitions at Charleston, specifically explores Charleston as “a queer place” but notes that Charleston is not depicted in that fashion. As he asserts,

Duncan Grant’s bedroom, […] the room he shared with his lover David Garnett during the First War, is seemingly heteronormatised within the current narrative of the space: visitors are told it is the place where Vanessa Bell gave birth to her and Grant’s child. Evidence of homosexual acts and queer attitudes at Charleston must be sought in other forms. Acts and emotions are memorialised in letters, diaries and documents, … [and] Charleston’s queerness is physically and visually preserved, as well, for Grant often used his art to re-interpret Charleston as a queer, homo-erotic place, to code queer representation in the permanence of paint. (153)

Drawing extensively (though by no means exclusively) on Christopher Reed’s scholarly work, the essay goes into significant depth with regard to the queer elements of the artwork Grant produced over the decades and explores various aspects of Grant’s creative erotica.

Todd Avery’s “Nailed: Lytton Strachey’s Jesus Camp” examines a neglected aspect of Lytton Strachey’s intellectual and erotic encounters with religion. Avery traces Strachey’s evolution from “a parodic sermon that is the earliest of his known Cambridge University papers, to the sado-masochistic crucifixion experiments that he engaged in with his last romantic partner in the early 1930s” (173). In the concluding section of the essay, Avery makes the argument that, in this sado-masochistic act of “symbolic inversion and perversion, Strachey is imitating Jesus—the spirit of the crucifixion—as much as he is mocking the central event in the story of Christian redemption from sin and shame” (185).

In her essay “There were so many things I wanted to do & didn’t: The Queer Potential of Carrington’s Life and Art,” Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina builds on her own 1995 volume, which, as she observes, “remains the only full-length biography of the artist Dora Carrington” (189). The essay explores Carrington’s fraught sexual journey, including her complicated relations with men—Lytton Strachey, Mark Gertler, Ralph Partridge, and Gerald Brennan. Gerzina also explores Carrington’s very affirming though brief affair with the American heiress Henrietta Bingham and her intimate relations with Poppet John, the 16-year-old daughter of Augustus John. The essay features excerpts from Carrington’s letters and is illustrated with reproductions of some of Carrington’s artwork, including depictions of Henrietta and Poppet in the nude.

Gaile Pohluhaus, Jr. and Madelyn Detloff in “Making Sense of Wittgenstein’s Bloomsbury and Bloomsbury’s Wittgenstein” craft their argument in a lively and amusing fashion that brings the great philosopher into dialogue with the ordinary reader while also exploring the concept of “queer” through multiple lenses. One key aspect of this exploration of queerness is the discussion of Wittgenstein’s sexual encounters with men and the whisky between G. E. M. Anscombe (Wittgenstein’s protégé responsible for the translation of his posthumous work *Philosophical Investigations*) and W. W. Bartley (the author of Wittgenstein’s biography) whose research indicated that Wittgenstein had a predilection for “young men” (Bartley qtd. in Pohluhaus, Jr. and Detloff 212). Anscombe’s 1973 letter to the editor of the *New York Times* disputed Bartley’s argument on nine different points, including Question 5, in which she disputes Bartley’s claims because he did not provide documentation provided by the various men he interviewed (see Anscombe qtd. in Pohluhaus and Detloff 213). Pohluhaus, Jr. and Detloff also explore the differing translation of the words “*seltsame*” and “*merwurksig*” in *Philosophical Investigations*.

In Anscombe’s 1953 translation, these words are uniformly translated as “queer,” but in the more recent translation (4th ed., 2009), revised by P. M. W. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, the range of translated words include “odd,” “strange,” “curious,” “remarkable” and “extraordinary” (216). The essay concludes with an emphasis on openness: “What is queerest about [Wittgenstein], in the contemporary philosophical sense of the term, may also be what was most Bloomsbury about him—his concern for making sense of the world in a way that opens us up to possibility, rather than binds us to fixed ideas” (221).

“Deviant Desires and the Queering of Leonard Woolf” by Elyse Blankley focuses on ways that the reader can view Leonard Woolf as a “straight, queer man” (224). In her exploration, she examines the correspondence between Lytton Strachey and Woolf while Woolf was in Ceylon. When Lytton wrote of a sexual act with Duncan Grant in which he couldn’t figure out whether he was “buggering, or being buggered” (Strachey qtd. in Blankley 225), Leonard countered by describing “a night of ‘degraded debauch’ […] with a half-caste whore” (Woolf qtd. in Blankley 225-26). Blankley offers as very thoughtful analysis of Woolf’s *The Wise Virgins* and also examines queerness through the lens of anti-Semitism and homophobia, noting that “two infamous miscarriages of justice[,] the trials and imprisonment of Alfred Dreyfus and of Oscar Wilde” (229), revealed that “both Leonard and Lytton were ‘queered’ within public discourses of hatred, which defined Jews and homosexuals with similar contradictions” (23).

As Mark Hussey states early on in “Clive Bell, ‘a fathead and a voluptuary’: Conscientious Objector and British Masculinity,” Bell “played an active and persistent part in the emergence into public consciousness of the figure of the CO during the First World War.” However, as the title of the essay suggests, Bell’s activism “has to a large extent been eclipsed both by his more familiar identification as an art critic and by the tendency of his friends and contemporaries, including Woolf herself and Lytton Strachey, to disparage him as a *bon vivant* and philanderer” (240). Hussey counters this misleading perception, detailing Bell’s life-long and “tireless championing of individual liberty” (241). The essay documents Bell’s doggedly persistent advocacy for the CO and focuses on the anxieties surrounding masculinity from the late Victorian era into the era of the Great War. Hussey quotes Lois Bimbings’ definition of the CO as “an unnatural man, […] an aberration who is not only unmanly and possibly an invert, but is also less than a woman’’”
(241), and integrates her argument into his larger investigation of British masculinity. He also illustrates his article with two images that align with Bibbings’ work. The first, “A Voluptuary” (1894) by Leonard Raven-Hill, depicts an Oscar Wilde-esque figure indulging in the pleasures of opiates (243). The second, a postcard titled “The Conscientious Objector at the Front!” (1916) designed by Archibald English, depicts a burly German in uniform with a bayonet pointedly directed toward the rear-end of a very fey British man, also in uniform, who says to his attacker “Oh you naughty unkind German—really, if you don’t desist I’ll forget I’ve got a conscience and I’ll smack you on the wrist” (244). Clive Bell emerges from Hussey’s essay as an advocate for freedom of expression who, as an opponent of “the tyranny of the average,” embodies “the philosophy of a voluptuary” (254).

In “I didn’t know there could be such writing’: The Aesthetic Intimacy of E. M. Forster and T. E. Lawrence,” Jodie Medd investigates delicate and multifaceted intimacies of the exchange of letters and literary works between these two authors. Forster dedicated his last collection of short stories—The Eternal Moment and Other Stories (1928): “To T. E. in the absence of anything else” (258). Forster wanted to continue to write fiction based on male homosexuality and did not wish to publish such controversial material. As documented in these letters, Lawrence read Forster’s work with great attention and sensitivity, and, because he was still coping with the shame of being sexually abused by the Turks, he also derived comfort and inspiration from Forster’s un publishable homosexually oriented stories. Just as Lawrence had supported Forster, Forster in return provided suggestions for revisions of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom. The essay relies heavily nuanced analyses of passages in the letters that explore the manuscripts the two men shared.

The closing essay is “Virginia Woolf’s Queer Time and Place: Wartime London and a World Aslant” by Kimberly Engdahl Coates. Coates focuses primarily on four works—Jacob’s Room, Mrs. Dalloway, The Waves, and The Years—each of which reveals “aesthetic disorientations” (278).

Coates argues that, despite being “Rendered temporally exact by the chimes of its many clocks, Woolf’s London is an urban space that excels at coercing its inhabitants to remain vertical in stance and upright in carriage” (278). In the essay, the concept of the “straight” (with a focus on the actual word)—whether it is of a character’s vertical spine or a park’s rigidly geometric shapes—is contrasted with the “queer” (again, with a focus on the word itself), a perspective that is disorienting and mysterious and given to bends, twists and loops. In Jacob’s Room, Coates argues, “queer is rendered conventional as long as it stays within the safe confines of the halls and dormitories of Cambridge” (280), but is less manageable in other environs such as London. Coates says of Septimus in Mrs. Dalloway that because, he, unlike Clarissa, “fails to straighten himself up[,] [h]e ultimately chooses death as preferable to Holmes and Bradshaw’s prescriptions for returning him to his position as a ‘soldier in the army of the upright’” (283). Coates sees Sir Bradshaw’s obsession with “proportion” as a further component of this rigid straightening, this enforced verticality (283), and she calls attention to the four times “queer” appears in the short passage describing how Maisie Johnson, just arrived from Scotland, perceives Septimus and Lucrezia in the park (284). In The Waves, “invisible realities running beneath that ostensibly placid veneer of civilization and the alternative temporal and spatial dimensions those invisible realities open up are precisely what Woolf folds into her ‘play poem, The Waves’” (286). In The Years, queerness seeps into the city as Martin thinks that “sights and sounds only ‘seem’ to be what they are” (288), and the hegemony of heterosexuality is radically dislocated since Nicolas, as Sara says to Eleanor, “loves the other sex, you see” (289). By tracing these reiterated instances of disruptive queerness Coates reveals a fascinating counter-narrative in Woolf’s work.

8 Lawrence had chosen to protect his anonymity and had changed his name to Shaw by that time.

Published on 1 June 2016, Queer Bloomsbury represented an aspirational moment in which queerness derived from the template of deep friendship in the Bloomsbury Group affirmed a brighter, queerer future. By the end of June 2016, with the unexpected vote in favor of Brexit in the United Kingdom, this moment of hope became dimmer, and, by the time of the election of Donald Trump in the U.S. in November, that bright future had faded. In just one year, Queer Bloomsbury has been transformed from a glorious celebration of Bloomsbury’s queerness to an inspiring template for resistance to a newly invigorated militaristic, heteronormative capitalist patriarchy.

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Works Cited


REVIEW

VIRGINIA WOOLF WRITING THE WORLD: SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VIRGINIA WOOLF
edited by Pamela L. Caughie and Diana L. Swanson. Clemson, South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2015. 228 pages. $120 cloth.

It was with great regret that I missed attending Virginia Woolf Writing the World, the 24th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf, not only because of my own investment in its prevalent “themes of war and peace […] given its commemorative year” (Caughie and Swanson x), the centennial of the start of the Great War in 1914 but because of its well-deserved reputation as one of the most varied and intellectually challenging such events around. The conference invited an international body of participants to consider how and why Virginia Woolf matters, a problematic that addresses issues of generation, globalization, received wisdom, scholarly consensus, and more. Selected Papers from the conference begins with an introduction that perhaps more than that any of the 23 other conference volumes sets the scene—not only of the theme, but of the venue, “the Mundelein Center, built by nuns during the Great Depression” (viii), and a blow-by-blow account of what was on offer, from the Bloomsbury Exhibit at the Newberry Library1 to the diversity of topics and participants: “58 panels with 181 papers, seven seminars, and three keynotes,” two of which are included in the volume (ix).

With so many provocative titles and subjects in the conference program, it must have been a challenge for Pamela Caughie and Diana Swanson, joint organizers of the conference and editors of Selected Papers, to isolate the 29 included herein2 and organize them into four sections/themes, however blurred the parameters of each.

Selected Papers offers its own consolations to those of us who missed the collegiality and intellectual rigor so typical of International

1 See also Appendix: Virginia Woolf Conference Exhibit Items Newberry Library, 226-28.

2 Hussey’s introduction is followed by the papers of four other roundtable participants, so the total count may be 33.
Conferences on Virginia Woolf; while lacking the immediacy of the give-and-take of ideas with students, scholars, and common readers, the volume offers refined and enhanced scholarly versions—and gives us all the opportunity to read papers that, given scheduling conflicts, even attendees inevitably miss. To begin the first section on “War and Peace,” introductory remarks of the participants in Mark Hussey’s roundtable on “Woolf and Violence” (one of the keynotes), involve the Sarah Cole’s reference to “mulberry tree” of “war, weapons, and futility” (8); J. Ashley Foster’s discussion of “lost histories of Spanish Civil War pacifism” (11); Christine Froula’s focus on the impact of aerial bombings; and Jean Mills’ reflection on whether Woolf’s “thinking is my fighting” is “something we can usefully claim for ourselves today” (15). Had I been present at the conference, I would have been awestruck by Judith Allen’s delivery of her paper on the fascinating and credible linking of Virginia Woolf, Edward Snowden, and the ACLU (“Intersections: Surveillance, Propaganda, and Just War”) and intrigued by Ann Martin’s juxtaposition of “the British motor-car industry and the World Wars.” I would also have been fascinated by Maud Ellmann’s reading in the second keynote on the “aerial perspective”: “how Woolf and Warner remind us of the atmosphere of war—an atmosphere in which the thunder and lightning of the bombing raids can scarcely be distinguished from the weather” (77). I find real value in Eleanor McNees’ paper for the insight it offers regarding the Great War. Equal worthily of note, are the papers of Erica Delsandro, who explores the unusual grouping of Christopher Isherwood, Virginia Woolf, modernism and memorials, thereby “complicat[ing] the dominant literary-historical narrative” (30); Paula Maggio, who questions labels applied to Woolf; Christine Haskill, who treats Three Guineas, the Great War and the “sex war” in her analysis of “Woolf’s Victorian Inheritance”; Charles Andrews, who discusses the “praxical dimension of Woolf’s pacifist thought” (64); and, David Deutsch, who explores “how Woolf’s depiction of music promoted and even predicted […] British popular musical cosmopolitanism” (69).

The second major theme in Selected Papers is “World Writer(s),” which, however redolent with “questions about war, violence, and feminism” (xiii), approaches Woolf as a writer whose reach is international. The Middle East, for example, is represented in Steven Putzel’s paper on Leonard Woolf, “Writing the World of Palestine, Zionism, and the State of Israel,” and in Erin Amann Holliday-Karre’s essay on teaching Woolf there in the context of “Western feminist ideology” and its connection that “turns the wheel of emotion towards pathos” (189) and recognizes Woolf’s invitation to the reader to accept the mental antithesis of gardens” (172) in many of Woolf’s works particu—

The fourth, shortest, and final section, “Writing and Worldmaking,” seeks to be a summing up of the motif that carries on throughout the collection: “the creative power of writing and Woolf’s writing in particular, to make and re-make meaning and community” (xiv). One may find that the best was saved for last, each paper using a unique approach to inform this central thesis. Anne Cunningham, in the first, offers a reading of Woolf’s first novel seen as linked to “shadow feminism” that is “grounded in refusal, failure, and passivity” (180), a novel reading based on a “negative feminism […] that does help us ask better questions in the effort to widen the scope of feminist inquiry today” (184). Maayan P. Dauber, in “Upheavals of Intimacy in To the Lighthouse, brilliantly suggests that Mrs. Ramsay is “the emblem of one of modernism’s greatest paradoxes: the more self-reflexive a character is, the deeper her inner life, the further away we seem to move from her” (184) and recognizes Woolf’s invitation to the reader to accept the connection that “turns the wheel of emotion towards pathos” (189) and the loss of traditional forms of sympathy and intimacy.

Amy Kahrmann Huseby explains how her neologic “euphonic prose” is the new name Woolf sought to supplant “novel” (193), and Kelle Sills Mullineaux in “Virginia Woolf, Composition Theorist” eschews consideration of the “imagined audience” (197) lest the hypothetical audience member, like the Angel in the House, shuts the writer down completely: “Present day theorists expand on her suggestion pedagogically, finding ways of encouraging students to write without fear” (202).

Certainly a similar invitation is proffered by Virginia Woolf Writing the World and the volume of selected papers that both participants and absentees can appreciate. We all owe Pamela Caughie and Diana Swanson a debt of gratitude.

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6 For the author and anyone else interested in the topic, articles in the New York Times by James Gorman on donkeys may be of interest.
Several of DeSalvo’s students recount how DeSalvo’s pedagogical strategies empowered them to confront their own immigrant backgrounds and to develop the voices that would enable them to verbalize their experiences of familial patriarchal repression and go on in their own teaching and scholarly work to further that which DeSalvo modeled and taught them (Ragusa 105-10; Bernard 111-16; Costina 117-29; Ottaviano 130-39). The introductory essay by the book’s editors furthers these testimonies (Catriona and Giunta 1-33). Of particular note are the essays that examine the courageous scholarly and biographical work done by DeSalvo to reconstruct the Italian background of suffering, hunger, and hardship that empowered her grandparents’ and parents’ journeys from Italy to New Jersey and the traces of that deprivational experience in her families’ lives and the home life in which DeSalvo grew up (Brandt 169-78; Bona and Kightlinger 189-209; Serra 222-31; Gennari 233-50; Tamburri 233-60). The hard work, imagination, diligence, creativity, and exemplary self-discipline that underpin DeSalvo’s Woolf scholarship also shape her excavations and the resulting memoirs. DeSalvo’s inspirational blog that models the work of writing and the help such work gives to others is yet another part of the impact of Louise DeSalvo’s work on others (Burns 179-88). This volume should be of interest to all whose own scholarly work on Virginia Woolf has been inspired and sustained by Louise DeSalvo.

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Fresca
A Life in the Making
A Biographer’s Quest for a Forgotten Bloomsbury Polymath

HELEN SOUTHWORTH

Fresca is detective story, cultural history and love story. It tells a tale of unconventionality, multifarious creativity, and a quest for new ways of living and loving amidst the complexities of Interwar Britain. For Francesca Allinson life and making art were synonymous, though both were cut short. Her story captures the topsy-turvy quality of a life singularly led; it shows how biography too gets turned upside down in the making – how the story of a single individual can throw the literary and social perspective of the period into relief.

Helen Southworth’s initial goal was to discover how Allinson’s fictional autobiography, A Childhood, made it onto Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s The Hogarth Press list in 1937. The result was to be immediately drawn in to the company of prominent artistic figures of the period. Writer, musicologist, puppeteer and pacifist, British-German Jewish Allinson (1902–1945) published with the Woolfs, duelled with Ralph Vaughan Williams over the origins of folk song and was psychoanalyzed by Adrian Stephen, younger brother of Virginia. Her connections register the cultural ferment of the Interwar years: a rich collaboration and un consummated romance with homosexual composer Michael Tippett; a love affair with Arts League of Service founder Judy Wogan; a friendship with designer Enid Marx; and an infatuation with poet Den Newton, 18 years her junior. Her life of promise, tragically cut short by suicide by drowning in 1945, is an eerie echo of Virginia Woolf’s suicide.

Allinson’s story spans the Twentieth Century, closing with Tippett weeping on stage at the Wigmore Hall during a 1992 performance of “The Heart’s Assurance,” the song cycle he dedicated to Allinson’s memory forty years earlier. In parallel, Allinson’s own A Childhood makes a second journey: a gift for a young woman living in recently liberated Belgium in 1942, the book comes alive again when she transforms it into an artist’s book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Helen Southworth is Associate Professor of literature at the University of Oregon. She has written and edited numerous books and articles, including The Intersecting Realities and Fictions of Virginia Woolf and Colette (2004), Leonard and Virginia Woolf, The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism (2010), and with Battershill et al., Scholarly Adventures in Digital Humanities: Making the Modernist Archives Publishing Project (2016). This is her first biography.
Hello, everyone, and happy spring. I hope you enjoy this new issue of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* as you wrap up your semester, prepare for the summer, and continue immersing yourselves in the writings of Virginia Woolf.

For many of us, summer plans include the 2017 Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf in Reading, England, hosted by Nicola Wilson, from June 29-July 2. The conference theme, “Virginia Woolf and the World of Books,” commemorates the centenary of Virginia and Leonard’s founding of the Hogarth Press. The conference program includes a tantalizing array of papers, special presentations and workshops, and highly esteemed keynote speakers, including Nicola Beauman, founder of Persephone Books; Ted Bishop of the University of Alberta; Susheila Nasta of Open University; Anna Snaith of King’s College London; and Uzma Hameed, dramaturg and collaborator on Wayne McGregor’s ballet trypthich, *Woolf Works*. And of course, books, books, and more books! Many thanks to Nicola Wilson and her team for treating us to what will surely be an important and memorable conference.

The International Virginia Woolf Society was once again well represented at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture in February. Our own Suzette Henke chaired the panel, which included papers by Maren Linett of Purdue University, Michael Schrimper of Emerson College, and Celise Lypka of the University of Calgary.

Maren’s paper, “‘Vicious and Diseased’: Eugenic Rhetoric in Woolf’s *Three Guineas*,” considers a diffuse eugenic rhetoric underpinning *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas*. Maren argues that the birth rhetoric Woolf uses in these key essays evinces eugenic ways of thinking about procreation. When Woolf writes that the brain seller’s “aenemic, vicious, and diseased progeny are let loose upon the world to infect and corrupt and sow the seeds of disease in others,” she adopts eugenic rhetoric and stakes eugenic fears to make her claims about intellectual freedom for women. Michael’s paper examines predominantly but not solely moments of observation in *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and the diary. In “The Eye, the Mind & the Spirit: Why ‘the look of things’ Held a great power’ Over Virginia Woolf,” Michael points to moments in which Woolf’s preoccupation with seeing makes itself visible and aims to explore why Woolf said, “The look of things has a great power over me.” He argues that Woolf drew a connection between observation and spirituality. Celise’s paper, “Latent Daughters: Future Generations of Women in Virginia Woolf’s Novels,” notes that Woolf wrote several novels with young women/daughter protagonists (such as Rachel Vinrace, Katharine Hilbery, the Pagter daughters, etc.), but Celise contemplates two daughters who rest along the margins of her novels: Elizabeth Dalloway and Cam Ramsay. Who are these peripheral characters in Woolf’s novels? The paper considers these daughters in unspoken conversation with their mothers and fathers, asking how they function as a future generation of women who trouble feminine social roles and perspectives.

In addition to established scholars, many undergraduate students are immersing themselves in Woolf’s writings. Essays have just been submitted for the third annual Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay Prize. The Society officers will judge the essays and announce the winner in August. She or he will receive $200 and have the essay published in a forthcoming issue of the *Miscellany*. Stay tuned for information about the fourth annual competition.

Speaking of officers, your current team—Ann Martin, Vice President; Alice Keane, Treasurer; Drew Shannon, Bibliographer; and I, your humble President, have been honored to serve you these past three years. As no nominations for new officers were submitted during the allotted time period for officer elections, Ann, Alice, Drew, and I will be serving for a second term, 2018-2020, and are delighted to do so.

I am also happy to announce that the International Virginia Woolf Society is now, effective February 17, 2017, a 501(c)(3) entity, which means any monies paid to the Society, such as membership dues and donations, are now tax-deductible for U.S. taxpayers. Many, many thanks to Alice Keane, Elisa Kay Sparks, and Financial Planner Kenneth Wilkinson for their diligent work in achieving this milestone for the Society.

I wish to close this column by remembering Jean Kennard, a Woolf scholar and author of *Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby: A Working Partnership*, who passed away on March 26, 2016; Alex Zwerdling, the author of *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, who passed away on May 16, 2017 at age 84; and Georgina Johnston, who passed away on March 20, 2017 at age 58 after a long battle with cancer. We know that no gathering of Woolfians will ever be the same without Georgia, and we extend our sincere condolences to her family, friends, and all those students and colleagues whose lives she touched over the years. Upon her death, the Virginia Woolf listserv was flooded with memories and tributes, collected by Paula Maggio and posted on her Blogging Woolf site at https://bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com/2017/03/22/in-memoriam-georgia-johnston/. All of the comments noted Georgia’s kindness, intelligence, warmth, and generosity as a scholar and friend. She will always be missed; she will forever be remembered.

*Kristin Czarnecki*  
President, IVWS

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1 Please see pages 12-13 for remembrances of these scholars.