Almost a Century: Reading Jacob’s Room

To the Readers:
First published on October 26, 1922, Virginia Woolf’s novel Jacob’s Room is nearing its centennial birthday. My fondness for this novel cannot be hidden; my copy sits well-worn, with page flags and scrap paper poking out at all angles, on a prominent shelf in my office. Sentimentality may explain some of this fondness—Jacob and I spent a lot of time together as I wrote my master’s thesis—but that is not the whole story. Even after so many years in publication, Jacob’s Room offers us snapshots of lives and experiences that remain relevant and compelling. That scholars are still able to find intriguing approaches to reading Jacob’s Room speaks to its lasting power.

Jacob’s Room is a curious novel; Woolf’s experimental writing style leads to ambiguities and uncertainties throughout the text. More is sometimes said in the gaps between the sentences than can be said in print, which leads to a myriad of questions: Who is Woolf’s elusive narrator? What moments of sexual intimacy are readers privy to and how are they coded to avoid an indecency trial? What are the “things that can’t be said” (49)? The call for papers for this special issue was intentionally open-ended; I hoped contributors would turn their attentions to the aspects of the novel that most fascinated them. The breadth of interests represented in the essays gathered in this issue illustrate how Jacob’s Room continues to lend itself to new insights almost one hundred years later and showcase the many ways readers can approach the text.

Stuart N. Clarke’s essay “Three Questions for Jacob’s Room” begins our collection of essays by delving into questions about the unwritten in the novel. These questions illustrate the level of complexity that runs through this text, particularly when one reads closely. Clarke closely examines the moment Jacob enters Mrs. Norman’s railway carriage to uncover many unanswered questions: What time of year was Jacob traveling? From where did he depart? What of his luggage, which is never mentioned? Woolf’s lack of transitions, Clarke argues, “was probably influenced by T. S. Eliot’s Poems” (16), published by the Hogarth Press in 1919. While these transitions were intentionally omitted, their absence makes it both necessary and urgent to try to capture the essence of their lost brothers” (19); yet Czarnecki argues that “their undertakings reveal the conventions and platitudes of mourning as empty gestures” (20). Among the many ways these texts intersect, Czarnecki notes that Jacob’s Room and Nox each reference “Ave Atque Vale,” Catullus’s poem on his grief over the death of his brother. On the final page of Woolf’s manuscript of the novel is a segment of the poem dedicated to “Julian Thoby Stephen.” Similarly, a version of the poem translated by Carson appears midway through Nox. The poem clearly speaks to the feelings of grief reflected not only in the novels but in Czarnecki’s own reflections on her sister.

“The Window: Framing Reality in Jacob’s Room” by Annalis Federici traces the way Woolf uses windows as recurring elements throughout the novel. While Jacob’s Room relies on multiple devices to create separate spaces, Federici explains that these windows are “expendents for enclosing reality and the character” and are frequently used to define moments of perception. As Federici writes: “The window in Jacob’s Room creates a dichotomy between inner and outer space of rooms, buildings, and carriages, but also shifting perspectives inside and outside the character’s mind” (22). Federici contends that because the structure of the novel moves from place to place so quickly, the technique invites readers to look through the windows—both figuratively and literally—offering invaluable insights into the characters.

Mary Wilson explores the gaps present in Jacob’s Room in her essay “‘chasms in the continuity of our ways’: Queering Domesticity in Jacob’s Room and To the Lighthouse.” Throughout this essay, Wilson reads Jacob’s Room in light of the queer revisions to traditional domestic narratives the text offers; such a reading, she argues, “provides a new link between this seemingly undomestic text and one of Woolf’s most clearly domestic novels, To the Lighthouse” (23). That is, both novels depict a queer character in domestic space(s), a character who might choose to challenge the expectations of domesticity.

In his essay “‘the young gentlemen talking in the room next door’ Privileged Spaces in Jacob’s Room,” Michael Schrimper traces moments in the text where the spaces educated men occupy are sharply contrasted with the less privileged spaces of women. Jacob’s narrator is only one such example of this contrast, though she is responsible for telling us this story and thus has a degree of power. Schrimper notes that our narrator is frequently locked out of Jacob’s spaces and can only imagine what might be happening just beyond her gaze. Because the gulf between male privilege and female exclusion has more to do with the availability of education than social or economic standing, Schrimper argues that even the well-off Sandra Wentworth Williams is limited in scope when her options are juxtaposed with the benefits elite education affords Jacob, Richard Bonamy, and the other young men the reader encounters at Cambridge.

You can access issues of the Miscellany online on WordPress at https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com/

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Reading, Fast And Slow:
Centennial Musings on the Early Novels
Guest Editor: Rebecca Duncan
duncanr@meredith.edu
Submissions due
30 June 2019

Issue 97 Spring 2020
Virginia Woolf: Mobilizing Emotion, Feeling, and Affect
Guest Editor: Celiese Lyppka
celiese.lyppka@ucalgary.ca.
Submissions due:
29 September 2019

Issue 98 Fall 2020
Remembering Thirty Years of the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
Guest Editor: Anna Marie Banting
ambantinger@hotmail.com
Editor: Vana Neverov
neverov1@southernct.edu
Submissions due:
30 March 2020
See page 14 for more information
If you have any questions, please contact Vana Neverov at neverov1@southernct.edu
This special topic closes with a poem by Sandra Inskeep-Fox, “kisses on lips that are to die.” The poem focuses on Sandra Wentworth Williams; in part, the poem expands on Wentworth Williams’ repetitive question “What for? What for?” (Jacob’s Room [JR] 170) and also includes a reflection on Jacob’s parting gift to her—a copy of Donne’s poetry (JR 169).

I am grateful for the work of these contributors, each of whom has given me a new lens or a fresh concept for reading this particularly engaging novel. I hope these engaging viewpoints will inspire new approaches to Jacob’s Room.

Alexandra DeLuise
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Work 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

Virginia Woolf Miscellany

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MLA 2020
Seattle, WA
January 9-12, 2020
Guaranteed IVWS Panel
“Grossly Material Things”: Woolf and the New Materialism
•
Chair: Kristin Czarnecki, Georgetown College
Organizer: Jane Garrity, University of Colorado at Boulder
Matthew Gannon, Boston College:
“Political Ecology and Post-Individualist Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse”
Kathryn Van Wert, University of Minnesota, Duluth:
“Virginia Woolf contra Deleuze: New Materialism and the Challenge of Ontological Incompleteness”
Jane Garrity, University of Colorado at Boulder:
“Objects of Emotion”

Louisville Conference 2020—Call for Papers
The International Virginia Woolf Society is pleased to host its twentieth consecutive panel at the University of Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900 in February 2020. We invite proposals for critical papers on any topic concerning Woolf Studies. A particular panel theme may be chosen depending on the proposals received.
Please submit by email a cover page with your name, email address, mailing address, phone number, professional affiliation (if any), and the title of your paper, and as well as a second anonymous page containing a 250-word paper proposal to Kristin Czarnecki, kristin_czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu, by Monday, August 26, 2019.

Panel Selection Committee:
Beth Rigel Daugherty
Jeanne Dubino
Jane Liljenfeld
Vara Neverow

Call for Submissions for the International Virginia Woolf Society Annual Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay Prize
The International Virginia Woolf Society is pleased to host the 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, undergraduate essays can be on any topic pertaining to the writings of Virginia Woolf. Essays should be between 2000 and 2500 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 a subsequent issue of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany.
Please send essays in the latest version of Word.
All entries must be received by 30 June 2019.
To receive an entry form, please contact Kristin Czarnecki at kristin_czarnecki@georgetowncollege.edu
Profession and Performance
The 30th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf

University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD
June 11-14, 2020

The Department of English will host the conference at the University of South Dakota. The theme of the conference, “Profession and Performance,” brings together two significant terms. The first term (profession) mattered deeply to Woolf. It calls to mind not only her sense of herself as a writer but also the set of specialized occupations she addresses in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), areas of study and livelihood traditionally reserved for the sons of educated men. The second term (performance) invokes the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf’s commitment over the past three decades to the arts, to theater, to music, to the spoken word and to their resonances with the performance and performativity of Woolf’s life and writing.

The combination of “Profession and Performance” occasions and encourages a cluster of other meanings and projects as well:

* the dynamic link between Woolf’s social critique (what she professsed) and her art (its performance);
* modernism’s role in the professionalization of literature and criticism;
* the livelihoods and lifestyles of Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group;
  * investigations of identity and community;
* Woolfian meditations on professions (i.e., on occupations, commitments, allegiances or declarations);
  * common reading and specialized study;
* profession as (public) performance (and vice versa);
  * questions of affect and attachment;
* reflections on the selves and the worlds we profess / perform in daily life, in politics, in ethics, in institutions and in ongoing efforts to teach and learn;
  * the performative life of professionalization (or the subversion of professionalization);
  * and many more.

More information about the 30th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf will be made available in the coming months.

If you have any questions, you can contact the conference organizer, Benjamin Hagen, at Benjamin.Hagen@usd.edu.

https://www.usd.edu/arts-and-sciences/english/annual-conference-on-virginia-woolf
Call for Proposals: Annotated Woolf
Clemson University Press

Molly Hoff’s annotated guide to Mrs. Dalloway (Clemson, 2009) offers multiple entry points for students first approaching Woolf’s celebrated and often misunderstood novel. Hoff’s masterful annotations provide a guide for in-class student readings as well as points of departure for new scholarship.

Clemson University Press seeks proposals for complementary annotated guides to Jacob’s Room, To the Lighthouse, Orlando, The Waves, A Room of One’s Own, and other works commonly taught at the undergraduate level.

For additional details or to propose an annotated guide, please contact John Morgenstern (jmorgen@clemson.edu), director of Clemson University Press.

The Virginia Woolf Miscellany Online

Issues of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany are available at: vi@nigawioulfmiscellany.wordpress.com.

The editorial guide to formatting for the Miscellany as well as the current issue are available directly on the website and previous issues can be accessed by accessing the links to the archives.

(Note: the project to scan and post all issues from 1-61 is still in progress.)

All issues are fully searchable in PDF format.

If you need access to a specific issue or article that is not available online, please contact Vera Neverow at neverowv1@southernct.edu

All issues to the present as well as those from Fall 1973 to Fall 2002 are also 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.

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-donate.html (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 and updates from the IVWS Newsletter. Members also have access online to an annual Bibliography of Woolf Scholarship. 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.virginiawoolfsoociety.org.uk/membership

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 events such as:

Birthday Lecture—AGM (free) with Conference—Study Days and Weekends*
Reading Group meetings
(*There is a charge for events marked with an asterisk.)

Subscriptions for the year ending 31 December 2019 are £18 UK, £23 Europe and £26 outside of Europe; five-year memberships (five years for the price of four) beginning in 2019 are £72 UK, £92 Europe and £104 outside Europe.

Beginning in 2020, subscriptions are £20 UK, £26 Europe and £30 outside of Europe; five-year memberships (five years for the price of four) are £80 UK, £104 Europe and £120 outside Europe.

The Society is always delighted to welcome new members. If you wish to join the VWSGB, please email Stuart N. Clarke at stuart.n.clarke@btinternet.com for a membership form and information about how to pay, or write to:

Membership Secretary
Fairhaven, Charnleys Lane
Banks
SOUTHPORT PR9 8HJ
UK

20% Discount for
Woolf Studies Annual, Issue 25
Promo Code: WSAC2019
(in effect from April 17 to August 1, 2019)

First go to http://press.pace.edu/woolf-studies-annual-wsa/ and choose Woolf Studies Annual, Issue 25; then initiate the purchase. Add the code above, get the discount, and make the purchase!
Société d’Études Woolfiennes

The Société d’Études Woolfiennes (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)
- Virginia Woolf, Still Life and Transformation (2018)
- Virginia Woolf and the Writing of History (2018)

Information concerning past and forthcoming conferences and publications is available on our website: [http://etudeswoolfiennes.org](http://etudeswoolfiennes.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 (“adhérer”) 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).

Cheques made out to SEW should be sent to:

Nicolas Boizot
12 Traverse du Ricam
13100 Aix-en-Provence
FRANCE

If you wish to join the SEW’s mailing list, please send an email to marie.laniel@gmail.com.

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


Editing Policies

The Editors reserve 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 Editors with original written documentation authorizing the publication of the materials.

Reimbursement for Permissions

The Editors will assist contributors to the best of their ability with regard to permissions for publication, including costs of up to $50 per item. However, the Editors have the option to decline to publish items or to pay for items. The Editors 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 Editors and the Editorial Board take no responsibility for the views expressed in the contributions selected for publication.

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The Miscellany retains all rights for future uses of work published herein. The contributor may, with the express permission of the Editorial Board 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.
Woolfian Resources Online

Virginia Woolf Miscellany:
Issues of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany are available in PDF format at https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com/. The editorial guide to formatting and the current issue are listed separately, while archived issues are listed in separate sections. If you do not see the issue that you wish to access, please contact Vara Neverow at neverowv1@southernct.edu. (These issues are also available to view through EBSCOhost.)

The Three Guineas Reading Notebooks Online:
http://woolf-center.southernct.edu
Contact Vara Neverow neverowv1@southernct.edu for more information about the site.

Facebook:
The International Virginia Woolf Society is on Facebook! You can become a fan and friend other Woolfians at https://www.facebook.com/International-Virginia-Woolf-Society-224151705144/. The Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain also now has a Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/VWSGB/.
And Virginia Woolf has other multiple Facebook pages that are not related to specific societies.

Blogs:
Visit Paula Maggio’s “Blogging Woolf” at bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com/ for a broad range of valuable information such as key Woolfian resources, current and upcoming events, and an archive of Woolfian doings now past.
Anne Fernald says she is “writing from a kitchen table of my own on the Jersey side of the Hudson.” Contact information: fernham [at] gmail [dot] com. The blog is located at https://anne-fernald.squarespace.com/home/.

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

E-books:
The majority of Virginia Woolf’s novels as well as many of her short stories and the complete texts of A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas can be read online at http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/.

Woolfian Google Alerts:
Have you signed up for Google Alerts? Did you know you could be totally up-to-date on the latest developments in the Woolfian and Bloomsburian world with just a few keystrokes? Check it out! It’s simple, fast and very rewarding.

VWListserv:
The VWListserv is open to one and all. To join the VWListserv, please go to the IVWS home page at http://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS/ and click on the VWListserv link in the left column. Then, follow the instructions.

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 are available online in PDF format at https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com. If you have questions or are seeking 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/ 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.acs.ohio-state.edu. In the body of the email, you must write: subscribe VWWOOLF Your first name Your last name. You will receive a welcome message with further information about the list. To unsubscribe, please send a message *from the exact account that you originally subscribed with* to the same address: listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu. In the body of the email, write: unsubscribe VWWOOLF.

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 kllevenback@att.net.

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

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 from the 13th and the 15th Annual Conference, published by Clemson, are available in downloadable PDF format online at http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cudp_woolf/. The Selected Works from the 12th and 14th Woolf conferences are available to view or download at the Woolf Center at Southern Connecticut State University: 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.
In Memoriam
Cecil Woolf
20 February 1927 - 10 June 2019

A beautiful tribute to Cecil Woolf, of Cecil Woolf Publishing, was posted by Paula Maggio on that day, with heartfelt comments by other Woolfians, at:

A special section, edited by Paula Maggio, will be devoted to remembrances of Cecil Woolf in Issue 95 of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany. Those who wish to contribute should contact her at bloggingwoolf@yahoo.com

In Memoriam
Louise A. DeSalvo
1942-2018

Reflections on Louise DeSalvo’s Work

A letter in the London Review of Books for September 25, 2014, complains that in some reviews of the National Portrait Gallery’s Virginia Woolf exhibition, and even in the caption of a photograph of George Duckworth with his half-sister, Woolf’s experience of incest seems to be dismissed as “the common coin of misery fiction.” “It’s a pity,” writes Jean Owen, “that such an event should be so casually disregarded at a time when historical cases of child sexual abuse are finally being taken seriously.” Invited that year to contribute to a festschrift for Louise DeSalvo (Caronia & Giunta), I tried in “The Context of Louise DeSalvo’s Impact” to explain that the substance of her book about Woolf and incest could not be clearly heard, particularly in England, at the time it was published (1989) because she was drawing on a body of recent testimony and analysis that was mostly unfamiliar to literary scholars then. Indeed, as I note in that essay, Anne Olivier Bell wrote in the VWM that DeSalvo had underplayed her interpretation of Woolf’s writing “with a vast largely recent American literature on the subjects of child abuse, incest, rape, adolescent psychiatry, family life, child-rearing, sexuality, and pornography”—taking for granted that such subjects were not the proper stuff of literary analysis. That perspective is still not uncommon today, although feminist critics such as DeSalvo have altered the situation profoundly.

I first met Louise in 1982 at the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, just as I was finishing my PhD with Roger Poole (whose own widely attacked book on Woolf was published the year I started my studies). Louise, soon realizing I knew nothing about American academia, invited me to sit in on a class of hers at Hunter College, and afterwards took me out to dinner, where she mentioned that she was thinking of writing a book to be called, perhaps, ‘children never forget’—a line from To the Lighthouse (65). The occasionally somnolent Woolf listserv can still be galvanized into heated argument simply by posting the name “DeSalvo.” Almost without fail, annually someone will post a snarky or dismissive comment about the incest narrative in relation to Woolf studies, and the old arguments will be rehearsed: it happened, but it didn’t mean much; it didn’t happen; it explains nothing; it explains everything, and so on. But the issue is by no means confined to academic discussions of Woolf, as Owen’s letter demonstrates.

In the early 1970s, there was often an intense identification with Woolf among women in the American academy. Ellen Hawkes Rogat described making what she termed a “pilgrimage” to the Berg Collection: “In a strange way,” she wrote, “her experiences and mine began to reverberate. Not only did her thoughts structure mine, not only were my feelings so often filtered through hers, but I also began to understand, almost vicariously, her responses to experience” (1). Echoing Woolf’s account in A Room of studying in the British Library, Rogat recounted being across the table from a “scholar […] who berated his wife, in a strained library whisper, for copying a manuscript too slowly” (1). For DeSalvo in the 1970s, even being allowed into this “sacred recess where […] I would soon sit next to all those famous literary scholars whose work […] I had read and do work of […] my own” was her version of “The American Dream” (“Puttana” 36).

Elizabeth Wilson has noted that incest was for many years “deemed so rare […] that it hardly seemed worth talking about” (35). When DeSalvo began to take seriously what Woolf wrote about her own experience as a child and as a young woman, she did so within a context formed by writers such Florence Rush, in The Best-Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children (1980), Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman, in Father-Daughter Incest (1981), Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton, in I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (1983), and Diane Russell, in The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women (1986). DeSalvo drew on these and other works of testimony in Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Work.

Also relevant to that context within which DeSalvo’s iconoclastic book appeared was what would come to be termed the “feminist sexuality debates,” more colloquially known as the “sex wars.” Feminist infighting about sexuality and its relation to violence and danger was brought to a wider public consciousness in April 1982 at the Scholar and the Feminist conference at Barnard College, when antipornography feminists picketed the event in protest against the presence of speakers identified with the lesbian s/m movement. In a review-essay of several books on sexuality for Feminist Studies, published that spring, Martha Vicinus had written that “the present state of sexual studies is exciting and promising in ideas, historical understanding, and insight into present conditions” (135). Looking back to this review several years later, B. Ruby Rich remarked that when Vicinus wrote, she could not have known “that her article would appear simultaneously with the disappearance of the landscape it described” (Rich 526). The confrontation at the gates of Barnard on April 24, 1982, marked a turning point in the transformation of a landscape wherein feminist work on sexuality proceeded at a scholarly pace and with academic tolerance for different points of view, a landscape, that is, where “academics” and “political” were mutually exclusive terms. The women planning the Barnard conference the previous fall had noted that the “feminist movement [was] in a political crisis, in part concerning sexuality” (Alderfer 13), and in the ensuing arguments of that political crisis, the issues of testimony, of naming, and of whom to believe would become acute and divisive.

New versions of a contested dichotomy between fantasy and testimony have had a resurgence recently, as the #MeToo movement circulates stories of rapists in the US Air Force or of sexually abusive celebrities
Dear Louise,

Although we never met, your book Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives (2000) transformed my writing practice. In it, you develop a method for writing about autobiographical trauma and grief based on the research of James W. Pennebaker. Pennebaker discovered that writing about difficult situations could, indeed, help the writer heal from them, but only under special conditions. In your words: “we cannot simply use writing as catharsis. Nor can we use it only as a record of what we’ve experienced. We must write in a way that links detailed descriptions of what happened with feelings—then and now—about what happened” (DeSalvo 25; emphasis in original).

What you meant, and what Pennebaker discovered, was that writing about trauma can be healing for the writer when it links thinking and feeling. In other words, we must connect what happened with how we felt about it then and now; connecting the two is the key to healing. You offer Virginia Woolf’s A Sketch of the Past as an example of a memoir which links thinking and feeling, the “I now, I then,” as Woolf puts it (75). You discuss your own childhood trauma and how you processed it through writing memoir using this method.

In Writing as a Way of Healing, you offer up instruction in the art of memoir, distilling the classroom exercises you used in your writing classes at Hunter College. Your depiction of your students and their writing is humane and generous. If you were here, I would ask you about the connection between this book and your earlier Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Work (1990). My gut feeling is that when you wrote the earlier book you had not yet discovered the healing methodology you subsequently worked out in your own memoir writing.

I feel, and I have no empirical evidence with which to support this claim, that many of us use Virginia Woolf’s biography as a mirror for our own autobiographies. I know I have. I discovered Writing as a Way of Healing when I was years deep into working through my own childhood and adolescent trauma through memoir writing. Your book continues to be a trusted guide for me. I believe you when you say, “your writing will help you unravel the knots in your heart” (31). Thank you, Louise. I wish we had met.

Catherine W. Hollis
U.C. Berkeley Extension

Works Cited

As soon as I learned of Louise DeSalvo’s death, I reached for my worn copy of Between Women, the essay collection she co-edited with Carol Ascher and Sara Ruddick. The collection was first published in 1984, a year after I graduated from college, and my copy is annotated with the multi-colored underlinings and margin notes of my 22-year-old self. Although I had read very little of Woolf at that time, I read DeSalvo’s essay, “A Portrait of the Puttana as a Middle-Aged Woolf Scholar,” over and over again. I know now that I was learning from her a model of scholarship in which academic work is not sterile and dispassionate, but is intertwined with relationships, politics, sexuality—in other words, with real life. This revelation, and DeSalvo’s passion and honesty in writing about her relationship with Woolf, showed me how to begin imagining myself as a feminist scholar. I am profoundly grateful to Louise DeSalvo for her legacy.

Kristina Groover
Appalachian State University

A Memorial Cluster in Honor of Dr. Georgia K. Johnston

Introduction
In March 2018, members of the Saint Louis University community hosted a two-day symposium to mark one year since the passing of Georgia Johnston—our beloved colleague, friend, and mentor. Joined by members of Georgia’s family, Georgia’s colleagues in English and Women’s and Gender Studies gathered to remember cherished time spent with a singularly incisive, intuitive, and kind woman and scholar. A highlight of our time together was witnessing and celebrating Georgia’s lasting presence in the intellectual and personal lives of her former Ph.D. students, six of whom gathered together to generously share their memories and meditations. We are happy to share these with Georgia’s wider community of colleagues and friends, with whom she shared an abiding and joyful commitment to the life and work of Virginia Woolf.

1. Georgia, On My Mind
Candis Bond, Augusta University

In “A Sketch of the Past,” Virginia Woolf writes,
The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else.

Since Georgia’s passing, I find myself thinking of her almost daily, but most frequently when I’m in moments of peace and calm. When I sit in my office, in the dusty light pouring through the blinds and the warm glow wraps me for a moment, in silence, I think of her. When I pause from writing and lean back, breathing deeply for a pause, I think of her. And when I think of her, I find that I’m not transported back to the past and what was, but that the present becomes more alive and full—I see meaning in life—“pattern[s]” in “the cotton wool” (Woolf, “A Sketch of the Past” 72)—and I understand why I do things as I do, as well as how her spirit influences so much of my life and work. And in these moments of great satisfaction, I am fortified by Georgia to keep living with drive and energy.

Georgia introduced me to Virginia Woolf in my first year of graduate school. Woolf became the focus of much of my graduate work and ongoing research, as well as my most beloved author. I am a willing believer in both fate and logic, and thus over the decade that Georgia was in my life, I somehow managed to work out a strange, star-crossed narrative in my mind about these two women—Georgia and Virginia—who both came to occupy my mind and soul in ways that have reshaped my very being. Both, in my mind, were women of confluence: women within whom profound depths could meet with light-hearted humor. Georgia could spend an afternoon in abstract thought over a text and an evening feeding the possum, Wally, that visited her back patio. Virginia could write a text like Three Guineas, protesting fascism and sexism oppression, and she could also dress up as an Abyssinian Prince and fool the British Navy as part of an elaborate practical joke. Georgia and Virginia were both women who contained the force of blunt honesty and unbounded generosity; they were women who could move the earth with their frustration and righteous sense of justice but who could also envelop you in a velvety, lush, understated feeling of complete calm. Georgia so often met me in moments of dissertation panic with words of calm support; Virginia, ever the cultural critic, could also express the simultaneous stillness and transformation of the everyday world. In The Waves, she slows down the dawn, writing, “The light struck upon the trees in the garden, making one leaf transparent and then another. One bird chirped high up; there was a pause; another chirped lower down” (Woolf 3).2 Georgia was ever urging her students forward, but, like Virginia, she never hesitated to pause and revel in the beauty of the moment; she embraced the beauty in the pause, the meaning in the silence. In To the Lighthouse, Woolf writes that “nothing is simply one thing” (186).3 Similarly, in Mrs. Dalloway; Clarissa thinks “she would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or they were that” (Woolf 8).4 Georgia was neither “this” nor “that.” She was many things, and she taught me, above all else, to resist binaries and engage with the gray are as something that did not come naturally to me but that helped me grow more than anything else as a person and a scholar.

When I try to articulate the legacy of Georgia in my life, it becomes difficult to know what I am without her; she is everywhere: in the way I...
I go into these retold stories—among cats and humans—because I think they illustrate how Georgia’s legacy continues in my scholarship and career. Warner’s twist on the recognizable pattern of retelling reminds me of the research I started under Georgia’s guidance: there’s a distinct challenge here to normativity—in other words, originating myths … among cats. Plus, Warner merges two seemingly unrelated forms—human retellings and feline ones—into one ongoing story. That’s what Georgia pushed for relentlessly in my scholarship. Throughout my dissertation writing process she wanted me to enunciate what she called “a new epistemology of the queer,” one that incorporated religious discourse into the construction of a queer subject. I’ll keep working on The Cat’s Cradle, and, as I do, I’ll keep remembering Georgia’s advice: “locate an alternative narrative,” she would say, and would indicate that I should look for discourses that have been overlooked. To me, this is one of the fundamental things that Georgia taught me, and it’s a story I was fortune to be a part of.

Also important, about Warner’s piece, is the idea of passing on, through language, a model of the world. I speak now of Georgia’s vast influence on me as a writer and teacher. Almost daily, I re-cite the advice Georgia once gave me about how to write, how to “focus” an essay (how many times did I hear that advice?), and how to edit, for clarity, what are often dense theoretical constructions.

This shows up in my work with freshman writing: to many a student’s frustration I have recommended the very advice Georgia gave me: shorten the frequent paragraph-length sentences dotting their papers, sentences that clearly got out of control. And, just as Georgia experienced when she wrote that advice all over my papers, I meet with everything from puzzlement to resistance. I find myself making similar recommendations for clarity in language to upper-level undergraduate and Masters’ students. Just the other day, in comments to a student working with what she calls “queering language through trans poetics” (in other words, a “dense theoretical construction”), I passed on a piece of Georgia’s advice from my dissertation. “Write as if you are writing to college sophomores,” I wrote, remembering when Georgia wrote that to me and said that she had received this advice from her own dissertation director. Again, it seems that the stories are passed on, that they are re-cited, and the mark of their validity is in the very act of transmission.

Lastly, I hear Georgia, more than a few times, in my own voice. Sometimes a student in class will put forward a particularly innovative idea, and I’ll encourage that student. I’ll tell the student how “fascinating” that idea is. When I do, Georgia’s voice echoes in my head. I can hear her using that word—“fascinating”—and I can picture the mixture of academic rigor with a deeply personal connection to a text. It strikes me as fortuitous that, as I began to think of what I would write about Georgia’s legacy, I was starting work with yet another of Warner’s texts, specifically a collection of short stories titled The Cat’s Cradle Book. What happens in its opening story, I think, encapsulates how Georgia’s legacy continues, still present in my scholarship. In brief, the story is about originating myths, and the retelling of those myths, among cats. “Once upon a time,” Warner says, there was a first cat, called Haru (15). Haru was “an exquisite story-teller,” Warner says, and Haru told to her humans what Warner calls “urtexts” (18, 25). Eventually, other cats tell the same stories—Mrs. O’Toady, for instance, and O’Toady’s daughter, Owly—and Warner herself, as the text goes on, writes down those stories, ones that she calls “universal,” “uncorrupted,” “not merely works of art,” a fundamental look at “catkind” (23-24, 31).5

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of reciting that affirms the power of that initial, shaping, (“fascinating”) formation.

3. Reflecting on Georgia’s Legacy
Melissa Burgess, Saint Louis University

This essay was a struggle to write. I did not want to look back. I did not want to invite in all the sadness I did not allow myself to feel last year, the feelings that were and still are too hard to fully feel. A year ago, we lost Georgia, and I know I still haven’t processed it all and probably never will. I spent years of my life writing a dissertation about women who bravely chose to look back and examine their own pasts, women who created beautiful and powerful memoirs that quite literally shifted how I understood myself and have helped me determine the kind of woman I am still becoming, women Georgia helped me understand and interpret. But when I was asked to write this essay, when it came time for me to look back myself and to try to put into words the immense impact knowing Georgia has had on me as a writer, as a scholar, and as a person, I kept finding myself hesitating and not wanting to truly begin this difficult work.

Many, many years ago, I was drawn to study life writing in the first place because I wanted to understand how we remember, what we choose to remember, and how we can preserve, learn from, revisit, and make meaning of our pasts. So, I will do my best to make meaning of the ways in which I have tried to carry on Georgia’s legacy in my work and in my life. Without a doubt, knowing her changed me for the better. She challenged me, pushed me, sometimes seriously intimidated me, but I always knew she cared about me. She was a great teacher and someone I quickly wanted to emulate. She always treated me not just as a student but as a whole person, and I have tried to follow in her footsteps in my work with students each day.

When I remember Georgia, I remember her first and foremost as my most important teacher. School has always been incredibly important to me, so I have loved and have been changed by more teachers and professors than the average person, but as my last professor, my doctoral chair, Georgia will always have a prominent place in my heart. It seems like forever ago, but I still remember how nervous I was when I first asked her to be my chair. While I was completing my coursework, I never had the chance to take one of her courses, so she did not know me at all when I wrote to her out of the blue to ask if we could meet. I was so worried, but I didn’t need to be. I started telling her about what I was interested in studying, why I wanted life writing to be my focus, and sharing the texts I wanted to write about, and before I knew it, Georgia had written two pages of notes on what I was telling her. From that very first meeting, she let me see that what I had to say mattered and was valuable, that my thoughts and my interpretations of these texts were valid, that I had something to say and that someone as brilliant as Georgia wanted to hear it. And, when I shyly asked her at the end of the meeting if she would chair my committee, she very quickly and very easily exclaimed of course she would, and I knew immediately that I was lucky enough to find someone who was definitely going to challenge me but who would also support me as I moved into the most difficult phases of my academic career.

Over the years, her enthusiasm and excitement about my work continued, and every time I turned in a new chapter draft, I could count on receiving feedback from Georgia that was detailed, challenging, and rich—feedback that showed me again and again how invested she was in me as a writer and how genuinely interested she was in what I was writing about. When I started my dissertation, she hadn’t read two of my major authors, Lynda Barry or Joan Wickersham, but she told me again and again how my writing and my arguments about their works made her want to know them. She delved into Lynda Barry especially and told me how exciting it was to read her colorful and layered graphic narratives because, if it hadn’t been for me, she might not have picked them up. I felt proud and honestly amazed that Georgia was not reading Lynda Barry because she had to as my chair but because she wanted to. We had many conversations together teasing out how Barry conceptualized memory in her comics, unpacking how she navigated the traumas of her past and even celebrated her playfulness and vibrancy. It was during these times that I remember first realizing how valuable it was for my own development to have a professor who treated me as an equal, to feel like my interpretations of a text could create a spark for her, too. I was undoubtedly learning from her, but she was always willing to learn from me as well.

Georgia was not just invested in my intellectual life. She also supported me emotionally when I desperately needed it. When I was still at the very beginning of drafting my dissertation, I split up with my boyfriend of over seven years. I tried and tried to continue on as usual but I could not write, I could not focus, and I felt like the foundation that had held up my life for so long had suddenly disappeared. I was able to open up and tell Georgia what I was going through and trying to process, and I remember feeling scared to admit to her that I just could not handle everything, that I did not know what to do. She responded with nothing but kindness and understanding. She told me it was alright to allow myself time to grieve and not worry about my dissertation for a little while. And, she gave me the deceptively simple advice to take long walks every day, telling me that moving, one foot in front of the other, would help, and it did. Georgia gave me the time and the space to put myself back together again, and when I was ready to jump back in, she was ready for me, too. She never judged me or made me feel ashamed. She treated me the same way I would have treated a friend who was going through a tough time, with grace and kindness.

The way Georgia helped me is often at the forefront of my mind in my current work as Coordinator of Tutoring and Writing Services programs at Saint Louis University. Although I am no longer in the classroom, I still work closely with over 100 undergraduate and graduate students in a different capacity as their supervisor. I try to remember to give these students the same grace Georgia gave me when I needed it, to see them holistically instead of merely as employees or students. I am immensely grateful that so many of them have chosen to open up and let me into their lives during their own difficult times, and I try to support them and advocate for them in the same way Georgia did for me.

Throughout this year, I have tried to carry her with me in other ways, too. I still fill my life with women’s life writing. Honestly, I don’t think I will ever read enough autobiographies, biographies, and graphic memoirs. And as I make my way through each text, I think about what questions Georgia might have asked of it, what connections she would have helped me see. And although I am very, very thankful I do not have a dissertation to write anymore, I still wish that I could somehow share my ideas with her one more time. When Georgia passed away, I had just sent her the full draft of my dissertation. I was so happy to finally make it to the finish line and so incredibly ready to hear what she thought about my introductory chapter and how I tried to pull it all together. I especially wanted to show her my dedication and acknowledgements so she would know how much she meant to me and how much she had helped me. And even though I will be forever grateful to my other departmental mentors, including Joya Uraizee, Toby Benis, Rachel Smith, and Ellen Crowell for helping me through my defense, I wanted Georgia to be there. I wanted so much for her to be there at the end of my long journey, to be there at my graduation, to meet my mom and dad.

I felt her absence deeply in the time leading up to graduation, I remember feeling this all-encompassing numbness, too tired and too overwhelmed to really feel anything, too caught up in the stress of preparing for my defense while also balancing my still-new job to stop and breathe. I feared that if I let myself feel the grief, I would fall apart and I wouldn’t be able to pick myself up again. But, when the morning of my graduation day finally arrived, I didn’t feel numb anymore and I didn’t feel alone. My family and my friends were there, of course, and I felt Georgia’s presence, too. I remember sitting back in my seat moments after Joya Uraizee had hooded me and feeling the new weight of the hood on my shoulders. I closed my eyes and imagined that Georgia had
been standing behind me next to Joya, too. I did feel her presence that day, and I still do.

I am thankful I knew Georgia. I am thankful that I chose her to be my chair and, more importantly, incredibly thankful that she chose me to be her student.

4. What Georgia Taught Me about Feminist Narrative Voice
   Annie Rues Neidel

I wrote my master’s thesis on Lucy Hutchinson’s memoir about her husband. But I wasn’t interested in his story. I was interested in the way she told hers. Lucy—and please excuse me for being personal here, but I am feeling personal—played multiple roles throughout the memoir. An assertive narrator, a pious and devoted wife, a staunch English nationalist, a ghost haunting the place of her husband’s death, and even a widow, lost, pouring out her story in the darkness of night: “Yet after all this he is gone hence and I remain, an airy phantasm walking about his sepulcher and writing for the harbinger of the day to summon me out of these midnight shades to my desired rest” (Hutchinson 337).

I was fortunate that my thesis chair suggested I ask Dr. Georgia Johnston to serve on my committee because of her familiarity with women’s autobiography and narrative theory. I can still remember sitting at that little table in Georgia’s office the first time. The smell of tea, the pencils lining the desk, the books that I had never met but could stare at for hours. My ideas were “fabulous” (they were almost always “fabulous”), and that first time Georgia introduced me to the books that would serve as the foundations of my scholarly work: Susan S. Lancer’s push for a Feminist Narratology that urges women to trust themselves and refer to their own legacies to define a narrator’s role in a text,9 Carolyn Heilbrun’s exploration of the way women tell their stories while confined in patriarchal narrative structures,10 and Leigh Gilmore’s critique of the patriarchal focus in the genre of autobiography.11

The argument that women are narratively situated in texts through particular and gendered methods shaped much of my doctoral course work. I followed current scholarly trends in feminist narrative theory and feminist life writing. I wrote seminar papers on the positioning of female narrators in slave narratives, multiple women’s communal voices in Victorian novels, and Freud’s narrative (mis)representation of Dora.

For my dissertation, I chose to record and analyze the work already being done by feminist narrative theorists, specifically on Woolf’s experimental fiction. I then considered that set of tools in conjunction with methods Gertrude Stein used in her multiple autobiographies to leverage her representations of self. Finally, I considered how all these tools when rethought and combined might be applied to women’s fictional texts; in particular, texts by women who did not have the same level of agency that Woolf and Stein shared. Of course, Georgia taught me my ideas were “fabulous.”

I don’t remember exactly when Georgia got sick the first time, but she was quite sick while many of us on this panel were finishing our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations. For each of us, she stopped her world and gave us our dissertations.

I am so relieved that my own breast cancer diagnosis happened after I had pushed through those final excruciating months of revision. I sat down at that little table again and Georgia told me that it wasn’t up to other people to decide that I was sick. She told me that she was excited about working as Graduate Director despite her fears of recurrence. Then we returned to my draft.

Georgia’s story was one of persistence. She controlled and told that story, and she encouraged me to do that same. One week after our talk I had surgery. Two weeks after that I defended my dissertation. One week after that I started chemotherapy.

During treatment I worked hard: I taught my classes, I presented at conferences, I advised students, and I even had a baby.

We are so often constrained by external expectations and patriarchal closures, but Georgia taught me that women can create their own stories through their own methods. So that is what I study and that is what I do.

5. Intellectual Freedom
   Elisabeth Hedrick, San Antonio, Texas

The first day of Georgia’s Virginia Woolf class, I arrived without the text. They were out of Jacob’s Room at the bookstore and the library, and I had ridden my bike to different public libraries, in the snow the day before, to try to get the text. No one had it. I remember sitting in a semi-circle, opposite to Georgia, who was sitting at a desk alongside the rest of us. She asked me a question: “What makes this work modernist?” I shamefacedly replied that I had not been able to get the text. She looked at me in disbelief and asked again. I had to repeat, “I don’t know. I haven’t read the text.” She was like a stone wall. She asked me again. Again, I had to confess, I really did not know: I didn’t have, nor had I read the text. She looked at me for what seemed like five minutes. Then, she moved on to one of the better students in the class, who actually had read the assignment.

Over the course of that semester, I knew I wanted to work with Georgia. Every time I came to class, she would ask questions about the text, and we would try to answer, which would lead to more questions, more attempts at answers, until we would come to a place where it seemed that we had reached an aporia in the fabric of the text that, when pulled on, began to ripple the fabric of reality. This was the kind of literary study I was interested in: literature as a way to interact with the unknown in life, a quest for understanding that was itself a way of life.

One day, we discussed the scenes over the course of The Years, where the successive generations of women in the Pargiter family come out to the porch to stand in their place and wave at the men, who were leaving to do the public work of society. It’s a simple gesture, the wave, but Georgia suggested that that gesture was merely the surface of a whole webbed network of prescribed choices of women. The gesture held everything within it. Complicity can be as simple as standing up in response to a call or waving demurely from a porch. Resistance, on the other hand, required everything: constant vigilance, throwing your whole weight upstream into the river, moving outside the system of rewards offered by patriarchy, empire, and conformity, into the Society of Outsiders where freedom from domination is its own reward.

Georgia brought an exacting lens to all of life. She was an Outsider in the best sense of the word. In Three Guineas, when Woolf’s narrator is asked how women might help to prevent war, she demonstrates how the roots of war extend throughout all of society, connected by the desire to dominate the other and to parade one’s own superiority (Woolf 134).12 She shows how these fascist tendencies to dominate pervade British society. Woolf proposed to combat the roots of war with the Society of Outsiders, which would not fight with arms, nor nurse the wounded, nor incite others to fight on their behalf, but

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7 Since this essay was written, Annie Rues Neidel passed away after a long battle with cancer, and her essay is published posthumously.


would remain completely indifferent to those engaged in any warlike competition.

Georgia stood elegantly apart from the systems of domination. She was wholly committed to living in such a way as to minimize her own impact on the planet, and her choices were all made toward the end of non-violence—to human and non-human life.

Georgia asked me several times to dog-sit and to stay at her house while she was away. During these stays, I had the sense that she lived in an easy harmony with the natural world. For one thing, I could never find anything to eat that wasn’t a vegetable. My favorite thing about her house—besides the note cards plastered over her door mantle, declaring all the words her dogs knew—was her compost. She instructed me to toss veggie scraps into the yard. “Where is the compost?” “I’ll show you.” We walked into her backyard, which was one rambling garden, where vegetable beds over the years had spread past their bounds and volunteered new plants each spring, until the whole yard was abounding with edible plants. She gestured all around her.

“Here is the compost. Or there. Or there. Really, just throw it anywhere, and it will get absorbed and used again.” In that yard, it felt like the earth responded in kind to her generosity. I’d wander her garden with my coffee, watering the butternut squash and okra and tomato plants, picking and feasting on the hot ripe cherry tomatoes as I went. I would return home more healthy after the stay, with my bike bag full of kale and okra.

Georgia operated from an internal logic that was not bound by what it looked like from the outside. She had figured for herself what was the best way to live, and she staunchly stood by her most central beliefs. She rode her bike to campus in all weather. I am a cyclist, too, and would often arrive to campus in the snow with a covering of ice on the road and a 20-degree wind chill. I would get off my bike to lock it, feeling secretly proud of being such a badass, when Georgia would come coasting up on her cruiser, wearing her sweater, her scarf trailing in the wind. She’d say “Good morning,” lean her bike against the bike rack—without locking it—and go inside, without the least nod to our grand accomplishment.

One of my favorite memories of Georgia was of encountering her way up on the fourth floor of Saint Louis University’s Pius Library. So many times, I’d come around the corner to the Gertrude Stein section and find Georgia walking through the library, wearing her helmet. At first, I wondered if she was having memory problems, so one time I mentioned it. She said, “Well, I’m just going to put it back on in a few minutes.”

She had her reasons, and she couldn’t care less what others thought about it.

Knowing Georgia made the work of studying theory and literature take on the urgency with which she seemed to live. Students were required to use utmost discipline in examining theory and text and, to me, the logical next step in that practice was to act upon the central core that you come to. For me that core was this: If you are not actively resisting every situation I come to—and what that power serves—to resist all forces and desires for domination, to live so that my actions may come into a harmony of integrity, a wholeness of purpose, as Georgia’s did. And to live wholly from that center, indifferent to others’ perceptions of foolishness or danger.

I’ll always remember Georgia riding her cruiser bike down an icy Vandeventer Avenue, with a flowing sweater and scarf, sitting tall and upright, in the middle of traffic, with snow flurries whisping around her. She rode slowly and unflinchingly, as if the sun was shining and the traffic and the ice did not exist. When I saw her doing that, I would always think, “Oh, Georgia.” But I also always knew she would get home safely.
CALL FOR PAPERS
VIRGINIA WOOLF MISCELLANY
ISSUES 96 AND 97

CFP: Virginia Woolf Miscellany
Issue #96, Fall 2019
Submissions Due: 30 June 2019

Special Topic:
Reading, Fast and Slow;
Centennial Musings on the Early Novels
Guest Editor: Rebecca Duncan

Centennial years for Woolf’s novels began in 2015 with The Voyage Out and continue in 2019 with Night and Day. To consider the critical legacy and continued relevance of these early works, we can make an analogy of economist and Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman’s notion of fast vs. slow thinking (see Thinking, Fast and Slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011). Fast thinking is intuitive, impressionistic, and dependent upon associative memory. Slow thinking is deliberate, precise, detailed, and logical.

Likewise, reading can be fast or slow. Fast reading of the early novels seems to hurry along to Woolf’s more celebrated works, treating the former as prelude or practice in narrative art. Impressions, including early reviews and Woolf’s own reflections on her process or state of mind, may be limiting, or they may take us right to the heart of the work.

Slow reading, in contrast, settles in and pursues a new approach, context, or dialogue and seeks to answer the question, “What have we missed?” For its fall 2019 issue, the Miscellany invites fresh (fast or slow) readings of The Voyage Out and Night and Day, as well as Leonard Woolf’s The Wise Virgins and The Village in the Jungle. Possibilities include perspectives of postmodern readers; dialogues with contemporary fiction; attention to happiness, pain, intimacy, disruption; narrative forms, historicist/contextual/generic dialogues—any approach that will encourage a contemplative re-reading.

Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words; 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 8th edition of the MLA Handbook. For additional guidelines, please consult the Submissions policy published in any issue of the Miscellany.

Please send questions or submissions to Rebecca Duncan, guest editor and professor, English, Meredith College, Raleigh, NC: duncanr@meredith.edu. Extended Deadline: 30 June 2019.

CFP: Virginia Woolf Miscellany
Issue #98, Fall 2020
Submissions Due: 30 March 2020

Special Topic:
Remembering Thirty Years of the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
Call for Submissions from Participants and Attendees
Guest Editor: AnneMarie Bantzinger
Editor: Vara Neverow

In the summer of 2020, Woolfians will celebrate the 30th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf in at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, South Dakota, marking three decades for the event. In Issue 98 of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany, we are compiling memories and glimpses of the first thirty years of the annual conference as seen through the lenses of personal perspectives and revealed through stories about individual conferences. What was the most memorable event at the conference? What encounter do you remember most vividly? What memory from the conference do you cherish most and would like to share with other Woolfians.

If you attended one of the following conferences, please consider submitting your recollections from a specific conference. Such recollections tell the story of the different highlights and events during the conference, including the panels and the keynote speakers as well as the ambience, the informal gatherings, and the adventures.

- Second Conference (1992; Southern Connecticut State University): “Themes and Variations”
- Third Conference (1993; Lincoln University): “Emerging Perspectives”
- Fifth Conference (1995; Otterbein College): “Texts and Contexts”
- Sixth Conference (1996; Clemson University): “Woolf and the Arts”
- Eighth Conference (1998, St. Louis University): “Virginia Woolf and Communities”
- Ninth Conference (1999; University of Delaware): “Virginia Woolf Turning of the Centuries”
- Twelfth Conference (2002; Sonoma State University): “Across the Generations”
- Twenty-Third Conference (2013; Simon Fraser University): “Woolf and the Common (Wealth) Reader”
- Twenty-Eighth Conference (2018; University of Kent): “Woolf, Europe and Peace”
- Thirtieth Conference (2020; University of South Dakota): “Profession and Performance”

We are seeking personal stories that are no longer than 100-300 words in length. Essays should be submitted before 30 March 2020 and earlier submissions would be definitely be preferred. Submissions should be sent to:
AnneMarie Bantzinger
ambantzinger@hotmail.com
and
Vara Neverow
neverow1@southernct.edu

feminist and queer readings, illness and depression, as well as desire and orientations are encouraged—other approaches are also welcomed.

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Three Questions for Jacob’s Room

If you turn to Jacob’s Room immediately after Night and Day, you are struck by a number of differences between the two novels. One is just how short Jacob’s Room is: Night and Day feels as if everything has been put in; Jacob’s Room cuts from brief scene to brief scene, and indeed, as early as 1932, in Winifred Holtby’s book on Virginia Woolf the chapter on Jacob’s Room is called “Cinematograph” (Holtby). After reading Jacob’s Room, the Woolfs’ friend Bob Trevelyan complained that Woolf had dispensed with too many transitions and scaffolding that perhaps people needed (SxMs-18/1/D178/1). She replied:

“I’m sorry about the obscurity—if you mean the actual sentences were obscure, and not only the approaches, and transitions, and situations generally. I think there is no excuse for needless difficulty—it is bad writing merely;—I shan’t tolerate it again, I hope. (L2 588)

Perhaps an example of a needless difficulty is Timmy’s thought, “Jacob’s off,” when they are on a boat on the River Cam. I assumed it meant that Jacob was wool-gathering, because it is preceded by a description of what Jacob sees:

Looking up, backwards, he saw the legs of children deep in the grass, and the legs of cows. Munch, munch, he heard; then a short step through the grass; then again munch, munch, munch, as they tore the grass short at the roots. In front of him two white butterflies circled higher and higher round the elm tree. (37)

But in the manuscript draft, Woolf has deleted “asleep” and inserted “dropping off” (Bishop 35). That change was obviously intended by Woolf and not careless, but the final change in the text tripped up this reader.

In omitting transitions, Woolf was probably influenced by T. S. Eliot’s poems. The Hogarth Press published his Poems in 1919; Eliot read The Waste Land to the Woolfs on 18 June 1922 (D2 178); the Hogarth Press published it in September 1923. Back in September 1920, she recorded: “I taxed him [Eliot] with wilfully concealing his transitions. He said that explanation is unnecessary. If you put it in, you dilute the facts. You should feel these without explanation” (D2 67-68).

So allusive—and elusive—is Jacob’s Room that there are, as Holtby wrote, “obscurities which even the most diligent study cannot penetrate” (136). Although I have my own list of cruxes, I will concentrate here not on the mysteries of what are written, but on three questions about what is unwritten.

John Sutherland’s series of Puzzles in Classic Fictions (1996-99) is devoted to (very) close readings of texts. He asks: “How deep can you get into the novel? Can you ‘feel’, seismographically, what is happening in the background of the novel, but not narrated?” (Sutherland and Le Faye vii). For example, he argues that, after Mrs. Dalloway had bought the flowers herself in Bond Street—which, by the way, must mean that she chose them, for she does not bring them home—she must have returned to her house in Westminster by taxi. Otherwise, she could not have entered the house at eleven o’clock when the airplane is sky-writing (Sutherland 222).

A comparable problem is the question of Mrs. Pascoe’s milk in Chapter IV of Jacob’s Room. Mrs. Pascoe lives near the Gurnard’s Head, about seven miles southwest of St. Ives. The narrator remarks: “Although it would be possible to knock at the cottage door and ask for a glass of milk, it is only thirst that would compel the intrusion” (JR 52). There are “tourists” nearby, who observe Mrs. Pascoe: “Look—she has to draw her water from a well in the garden” (53). A few paragraphs later, “Mrs. Pascoe went indoors, fetched a cream pan, came out, and stood scouring it” (54). (For a moment, one has a sense of uncertainty: no, this is not a cream-colored pan, but one for making cream.) So, Mrs. Pascoe must have milk, and the tourists must know that—before they see her with the cream pan. In the early years of the twentieth century near the Gurnard’s Head, there would have been no shops, no milk deliveries, no motorized vehicles. When the Woolfs were at Asheham in the depths of Sussex in 1918, Woolf wrote: “Lytton & I walked for milk. […] Went on to Killicks [dairy farmer?]” (“Asheham Diary” 30). If Mrs. Pascoe had to walk each day to get milk from a local farmer, she would not be able to carry enough to make cream, far less be able to dole out milk to passing tourists, even for a few pence. The answer must be that the Pascoes have a cow and that it is grazing adjacent to their house. The tourists have noticed, and realized that the Pascoes have milk to spare.

At the beginning of Chapter III, when Mrs. Norman observes Jacob as he jumps into her railway carriage on a non-stop train to Cambridge, it is probably May 1907, the end of his first year. He is nineteen (31). Later on, it is probably June, if “Lady Miller’s picnic party” (38) is any indication:

The most delightful of Cambridge festivals is May Week, which despite its name takes place in June. It is devoted to the entertainment of visiting friends and relations, […] and pre-eminent among the sporting events are the May [Boat] Races, which take place on four consecutive afternoons. (Guide 120-21).

In 1907, the races were held from Wednesday, June 5, to Saturday, June 8 (“Calendar” 451). (Woolf had visited “Cambridge for the May week” in June 1900 (L1 34) and again in June 1905 (L1 192).)

Where does Jacob get on the train? Where has he come from? There is no mention of his having luggage, although Mrs. Norman’s dressing-case is mentioned twice. If it is term time, he surely will not be travelling to and from Scarborough, 200 miles away, involving a complicated rail journey. If he has come from Scarborough, perhaps he has changed at Ely, from where it is only a twenty-minute journey to Cambridge. Of course, he may have detoured via London. It is time to consult Bradshaw’s General Railway Guide for May 1907. Unfortunately, Bradshaw is not for uninitiated, as Max Beerbohm’s Zuleika Dobson discovered at about the same time, when she was trying to get from Oxford to Cambridge:

She snatched Bradshaw.

1 Stuart N. Clarke is editing Jacob’s Room for Cambridge University Press.
We always intervene between Bradshaw and anyone whom we see consulting him. “Mademoiselle will permit me to find that which she seeks?” asked Mélisande.

“Be quiet,” said Zuleika. We always repulse, at first, anyone who intervenes between us and Bradshaw.

We always end by accepting the intervention. “See if it is possible to go direct from here to Cambridge,” said Zuleika, handing the book on. “If it isn’t, then—well, see how one does get there.”

We never have any confidence in the intervener. Nor is the intervener, when it comes to the point, sanguine. With mistrust mounting to exasperation Zuleika sat watching the faint and frantic researches of her maid.

“Stop!” she said suddenly. “I have a much better idea. Go down very early to the station. See the station-master. Order me a special train. For ten o’clock, say.” (Beerbohm qtd. in Forster, Aspects 111)

E. M. Forster concluded that she “does not seem ever to have arrived, and we can only suppose that […] her special train failed to start, or, more likely, is still in a siding at Bletchley” (112).

It would be scholarship misapplied to try to pursue through Bradshaw a likely route for a putative journey from Scarborough to Cambridge, and reasonable instead to assume that Jacob got on in London. In May 1907, there were a few weekday non-stopping trains from St. Pancras and Liverpool Street stations to Cambridge (Bradshaw’s 276-77). E. M. Forster remembered that the trains took an hour and a quarter (Forster, “Looking Back” 58).

We may conclude, with less certainty than in the case of the Pascoes’ cow, that Woolf envisaged the train travelling from London to Cambridge. However, what is important in this scene is the railway carriage itself—a favorite trope of Woolf’s. For her, it evoked the Edwardian writers and their conventions she was at pains to renounce in Jacob’s Room: see “An Unwritten Novel” and “Character in Fiction” (later called “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”), and her comment that “Bennett, Galsworthy and so on […] adhere to a formal railway line of sentence” (L3 135). Mrs. Norman is reading “one of Mr Norris’s novels” (31), about whom Woolf concluded (in her sixth and final review of his novels) that:

[the] demands of a good story probably help to guide his steps. A love of clean language forbids riot or indiscretion in that department. A moderate, or even slightly cynical, view of human nature checks [the] demands of a good story probably help to guide his steps. A love of clean language forbids riot or indiscretion in that department. A moderate, or even slightly cynical, view of human nature checks the [the] demands of a good story probably help to guide his steps. A love of clean language forbids riot or indiscretion in that department. A moderate, or even slightly cynical, view of human nature checks

My final question is extraneous to the text. Jacob grows up in Scarborough, and 15% of the novel is set there. Did Woolf ever visit Scarborough? There is no evidence that she did, and we are still “Looking for a Postcard from Scarborough” (Dell). David Bradshaw also wanted to believe that she did, perhaps to visit Anne Brontë’s grave (13). I have suggested that perhaps Woolf snuck off from Leonard, when he was studying the Co-operative movement in York in March 1913 (11). However, I become less and less convinced without evidence to support it. Woolf often uses her own biography in writing her fictions, even if they are not directly autobiographical. If she did not ever visit Scarborough, then her choice of the town for the Flanderses’ house becomes all the more significant.

There are links between St. Ives and Scarborough. Here is just one. There is a plaque on the outside wall of St. Leonard’s Chapel by the St. Ives pier: “To commemorate the record breaking passage made by St. Ives lugger Lloyd SS5[,] Scarborough to St. Ives, 600 miles in 50 hours in 1902.” Incidentally, that makes the narrator’s statement that “Scarborough is seven hundred miles from Cornwall” (7)—it is actually about 430 miles by road from St. Ives—less outrageous.

Presumably the main reason for Woolf’s choosing Scarborough for the setting of the Flanderses’ house was its resonance with the First World War:

“The guns?” said Betty Flanders, half asleep, getting out of bed and going to the window, which was decorated with a fringe of dark leaves.

“Not at this distance,” she thought. “It is the sea.” (175)

Betty’s first thought is that she is hearing the guns in France, no doubt where her doomed son Jacob is fighting, but if she is hearing guns, they are out in the North Sea bombarding Scarborough. It is therefore eight o’clock on Wednesday, December 16, 1914. The “enemy battle-cruisers Derfflinger and Von der Tann, and the triple-funnelled light-cruiser Kolberg, had peeled off from Admiral Hipper’s First Scouting Group[,] [...]” (Marsay 11). “As dawn approached, the trio of vessels remained cloaked from detection by a hell-sent rolling bank of early morning mist typical to this coast” (Marsay 11). “The town’s ordeal had lasted for just twenty-five minutes, but […] more than 80 had been injured. Many more were suffering from shock. When the final death-roll was called the total would number 18” (97). At the inquest on December 18, Arthur Dean, the Chief Officer of the Scarborough Coastguard, estimated that about 500 shells had been fired and that when the warships “first opened fire, they were some 600 yards off the castle head, but by the time they had passed the harbour [...] they were within 500 yards” (133). In Scarborough, “many people [...] at first thought the bombardment was a severe thunderstorm” (233).

Describing “the sound of the guns in France [...] as heard [...] from the top of the South Downs” in August 1916, Woolf wrote that “it sounds like the beating of gigantic carpets by gigantic women, at a distance” (“Heard on the Downs” 40). In an air raid in London in October 1917, the anti-aircraft guns sounded similar: “This fog had a peculiar effect, for it deadened the sound of guns even near at hand, and the reports sounded like nothing so much as giant carpets being beaten with a large stick” (“Last Night’s Air Raid” 7). An old lady interviewed for a television program in 2013, who experienced the Scarborough bombardment when she was a girl, was asked what it was like: “Like carpets being beaten.”

In the famous “Remember Scarborough!”2 poster, “the figure of Britannia is leading the men of Britain to enlist as Scarborough burns in the background. It was published in January 1915 by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, who tried to use the public anger at the bombardment as a tool to boost military recruitment” (Wood 21).

The raid on Scarborough was previously discussed in the Virginia Woolf Miscellany by Masami Usui in 1990, who concluded: “Woolf describes neither the Raid nor the War, yet implies men’s war, its irony, and its consequences by introducing untold and unknown women’s history” (7).

Stuart N. Clarke
Independent Scholar

Works Cited


2 Go to https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/14989 to view the image of the poster.
She heads straight for the blue tricycle parked under the Christmas tree. In her pink and white special-occasion dress and bare feet, she pushes the trike back and forth a few times before clambering onto the seat and trying the pedals. Next, she’s sitting on the floor, opening more presents—throwing wrapping paper, tissue, and box lids over her shoulder like it’s old hat, although she’s just a toddler. She glances at the camera once or twice. Mainly, she focuses on her gifts, sometimes turning to her father for affirmation of how she should react to the bounty spread before her. Her mother films it all. (They are not yet my mother and father.) She concentrates as she pulls the next doll or toy out of a box or bag. Christmas tree tinsel dangles in clumps from the bottom branches almost to the floor. The mountain of presents seems never-ending. It’s a bright, warm scene. I can almost smell the breakfast they’ve had, or the coffee brewing, or the turkey that may already be roasting in the oven.

I’m named after her, this child in the grainy video who died when she was three years old, eight and a half years before I was born. Until now, I’ve only seen her in small black-and-white photographs in which she seemed frozen and far, far away. Now in my forties, I’m watching her spring to life for the very first time. My husband and I watch the video on our TV; later, I’ll add it to my desktop and watch it over and over again. This first time, I brace myself for what I’m about to see. I arm myself with tissues, lean forward, hold my breath. And I cry and cry.

In my family, she’s always been called the first Kristin. My parents are voracious readers who named their firstborn after the heroine in Sigrid Undset’s Kristin Lavransdatter trilogy. I find myself needing now to explore this act of naming, this legacy, this spectral sister. I feel sorry for her, robbed of life at such a young age. I even miss her sometimes, if it’s possible to miss someone you’ve never met. I want it known that she existed, that her time on earth mattered. I want to reflect on what having her name means for me and my family.

I’m tempted to write, “I want her to know she’s not forgotten,” but as undertaker Thomas Lynch affirms, “there is nothing, once you are dead, that can be done to you or for you or with you about you that will do you any good or any harm?” (7). Remember, he repeats several times, “The dead don’t care.” All the same, undertakings carry tremendous significance, for they “are the things we do to vest the lives we lead against the cold, the meaningless, the void, the noisy blather, and the blinding dark” (xviii). Our undertakings, Lynch attests, “seek to make some sense of life and living, dying and the dead[.] […] To undertake is to bind oneself to the performance of a task, to pledge or promise to get it done” (xix).

So I set out to perform the task of writing about the first Kristin—binding myself to this lost little girl to try to know her better, know myself better, and explore the unique phenomenon of two sisters sharing one name. I know she doesn’t care, that “the dead don’t care,” yet doesn’t the phrase nevertheless imbue the dead with some semblance of agency?

Over the next couple of years, I strive to learn everything I can about the first Kristin, and I gather together the few remaining objects linked to her: photographs stuffed in envelopes labeled, in my father’s writing, “Kristin I” that I organize and place in an album, the communion tray a friend of my mother’s gave her upon the first Kristin’s death, and the Steiff teddy bear that belonged to her. My parents later gave it to my brother, and he then gave it to his son. I recently asked my brother to send it to me, and when it arrived, I opened the package and finally, after all this time, saw my dead sister’s teddy bear (I don’t remember seeing it in our house growing up). It looks pretty good for being nearly 60 years old and having been handled by children, packed, unpacked, and moved around the country several times. Made of mohair and cotton, its fur smells good and clean, only the slightest bit musty. It feels terribly bend the lower limbs so it can sit on my bookcase next to pictures of the first Kristin and the communion tray. I guess I’ve created a shrine.

Thinking about a deceased sibling draws me to Virginia Woolf, devastated by the death in 1906 of her beloved brother Thoby Stephen, lost at age 26 to typhoid fever, misdiagnosed for ten days as malaria. Woolf fictionalizes Thoby in her third novel, Jacob’s Room (1922), a two-fold elegy for the generation of young men wiped out in the First World War and for Thoby himself, immortalized in the character of Jacob, whose surname, Flanders, recalls “one of the bloodiest battlefields in World War I” (Neverow lxxxi). Much has been written about the elegiac nature of Woolf’s œuvre, which she, too, acknowledges. In a
diary entry of June 27, 1925, she writes of the new book taking shape in her mind. “But while I try to write, I am making up ‘To the Lighthouse’ —the sea is to be heard all through it. I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant ‘novel.’ A new —— by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?” (D3 34).

In her writing notebook, at the end of the manuscript of Jacob’s Room, Woolf wrote out the last line of Roman poet Catullus’s poem 101, “Ave Atque Vale” (“Hail and Farewell”), his elegy to his dead brother:

\[ \textit{Atque in perpetuum, frater; ave atque vale} \]

\textit{Julian Thoby Stephen}  
\textit{(1880-1906)}

Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale.

Woolf would have known the English translation of the poem in her Loeb:

\textit{Wandering through many countries and over many seas I come, my brother, to these sorrowful obsequies, to present you with the last guerdon of death, and speak, though in vain, to your silent ashes, since fortune has taken your own self away from me— alas, my brother, so cruelly torn from me! Yet now naught else availing take these offerings, which by the custom of our fathers have been handed down—a sorrowful tribute—for a funeral sacrifice: take them, wept with many tears of a brother, and for ever, O my brother, hail and farewell!}  

Two years later, her sister Vanessa named her first child Julian, Thoby’s given name. Woolf would also commemorate their lost brother in Jacob’s Room.

Writing in her diary on January 26, 1920, the day after her 38th birthday, Woolf celebrates “arriving at some idea of a new form for a new novel” (D2 13): Jacob’s Room, a departure from her first two more traditional novels, The Voyage Out (1915) and Night and Day (1919). “For I figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular,” she writes, “but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist” (D2 13-14). As Vara Neverow states, “Woolf’s experimental objectives seem to have been fully realized in Jacob’s Room” (xl). Woolf had created a new kind of novel for a new, unprecedented post-Victorian, post-war world, a novel that mourns the war dead while at the same time heralding “a euphoric and liberating achievement for the author herself, who having at last said ‘something in [her] own voice’ also had been able to launch her novel from her own press” (Neverow xxxvi).

I struggle with Jacob’s Room. I find it the most challenging of Woolf’s novels, and I reread it often to try to absorb and grasp it as much as I can. Once, I began typing it out, imagining such a task would prompt close scrutiny of each word and lead to a greater understanding of Woolf’s choices and thought process as she composed the novel. I typed the first 12 pages before concluding I would be better served by just reading it—and reading Woolf’s elegy to her lost brother brings me to Anne Carson’s Nox (2010). Rather than provide a touchstone for reflecting on a brother’s demise as it does in Jacob’s Room, “Ave Atque Vale” serves as the foundation for Nox. Housed in a slate-gray cardboard box, the pages of Nox unfold like an accordion. On the left-hand pages, so to speak, Carson traces the etymology of each Latin word of poem 101, one word per page. On the right-hand sides, she strives to assemble the story of her older brother, Michael, gathering her thoughts along with old photographs, the few postcards he sent over the years, and “the one letter he wrote home to his mother in his twenty years of absence” (Fleming 66). “My brother ran away in 1978, rather than go to jail,” Carson writes, in a paragraph repeated four times on four subsequent pages amid scraps of a torn-up letter Michael had written (2.2). Sometimes Carson and her mother heard nothing from Michael for years at a time. In Nox, Carson tells the story of her mother’s grief as well as her own as they try to recover Michael even before he dies and then come to terms with his death in Copenhagen, which they learn about two weeks after the fact from his wife, whom they have never met.

Mid-way through Nox, Carson shares her own hard-won translation of “Ave Atque Vale,” the first three lines of which read:

\textit{Many the peoples many the oceans I crossed—I arrive at these poor, brother, burials so I could give you the last gift owed to death and talk (why?) with mute ash.}

\textit{Now that Fortune tore you from me, you oh poor (wrongly) brother (wrongly) taken from me}  

I like to think Woolf would have appreciated Carson’s translation, with its parenthetical interpolated questions and commentary from deep within the mind of the bereft. “I wanted to fill my elegy with light of all kinds. But death makes us stingy,” Carson writes. “No matter how I try to evoke the starry lad he was, it remains a plain, odd history. So I began to think about history” (1.0). As Joan Fleming recognizes, “The light comes [to Carson] when she […] mobilizes her elegy to ask questions about the very nature of history and biography itself” (67), an apt description of Woolf’s method in Jacob’s Room as well.

Early in the novel, the narrator seems to be lurking outside Jacob’s Cambridge rooms, out of earshot and sometimes without a clear sightline into his window. “Heaven knows what they were doing,” she says of Jacob and his friends. “What was it that could drop like that?” she wonders. Her wording throughout, ironically in relation to Jacob more than any other character, is speculative: “Now and then there was a thud, as if some heavy piece of furniture had fallen.” “One supposed,” “Were they reading?” “Undoubtedly,” “no doubt,” and “perhaps,” she muses, yet she forsees, chillingly, Jacob’s and his friends’ doom: “but there is no need to think of them grown old” (41). Later the narrator comments on the unknowability of people: “It seems that a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown” (72).

The first Kristin similarly eludes me: A small child glimpsed under cellophane in old photo albums. A shadow sibling, known—barely—through disconnected fragments doled out sporadically by our parents and then less and less frequently over nearly 50 years. As I hold the first Kristin steadily in my mind, however, gently probing my parents for details, asking my siblings for their thoughts, gazing at pictures of her, and repeatedly watching the video, she begins to assume greater shape. She attains greater solidity. That evanescent figure in the old photographs becomes her own person. She grows familiar to me, and I begin to feel like her protective big sister rather than the other way around—rather than the way it was supposed to be.

Jacob’s Room and Nox demonstrate that, for Woolf and Carson, elegizing their brothers necessitated a new art form: the fragmentation, stream-of-consciousness, allusiveness, and fluidity that became endemic to Woolf in Jacob’s Room, and the pastiche of forms—memoir, poem, essay, photography, and translation—that comprises Carson’s Nox.  

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3 Fleming points out that “[w]hile the book can be read similarly to a codex, with the regular folds forming a sense of left- and right-hand pages, the book is actually one continuous page” (65).

4 You can view Anne Nox’s full poem at https://theintercoastals.com/demersdaughter/many-the-peoples-many-the-oceans-i-crossed-i.

5 Smythe notes Woolf’s use of the “structural technique of the fragment, story and sketch to compose Jacob’s Room” (69) and cites Gillian Beer’s description of
writers try to capture the essence of their lost brothers and realize that doing so is impossible. Their undertakings reveal the conventions and platitudes of mourning as empty gestures. Woolf’s elegies—not only Jacob's Room but also To the Lighthouse and The Waves (in which the character Percival serves as another avatar for Thoby)—display “an undeniable compulsion to confront the human inability to adequately express loss or absence,” writes Kelly S. Walsh (3). In the same vein, “Carson works to uncover a less painful version of Michael’s painfully mysterious life,” Fleming finds, “while insisting on the impossibility of interpreting his life with any authority or finality” (66). “We want other people to have a centre,” Carson states, “a history, an account that makes sense. We want to be able to say This is what he did and Here’s why. It forms a lock against oblivion. Does it?” (3.3).

Poem 101 itself resists closure. “Even the poem’s end, where Catullus draws on words spoken at a funeral,” observes Aaron M. Seider, “juxtaposes connection and separation: ‘ave carries the dual meanings of ‘hail’ and ‘farewell’ and combines them to create a bitter irony”’ (287). Woolf and Carson’s rejection of traditional modes of writing and grieving, their experimentation with elegy and ways of mourning, and their calling upon poem 101 to frame their “grief-work” compel us, paradoxically, to grasp the fact of their brothers’ existence along with their irredeemable absence: one gifted, adored, a Cambridge University graduate; the other troubled, a struggling student, a run-away.6 I began to wonder whether my own deceased sister is the reason I’m drawn to literature elegizing siblings and to exploring the various and saddening ways in which families lose their children, sometimes long before an actual death.

If ever I feel inclined to box away pictures of the first Kristin, box away her teddy bear, I reflect on Woolf and Carson interweaving their elegies for their brothers with the materiality of these men’s lives—a postage stamp, a scrap of a letter, faded photographs, and Thoby’s books and drawings, which Woolf kept in her own library for the rest of her life.7 As Jacob's Room concludes, Mrs. Flanders (who grieves for her own brother, Morty, whereabouts unknown, possibly lost at sea) cries out to her friend Bonamy as she wonders what to do with “a pair of Jacob’s old shoes” (187). “The answer, [Woolf’s] poetics suggest, is to live with them,” writes Walsh, “to accept their unbearable weight, and not try to throw them away” (9). As Theodore Koulouris says of mourning in Jacob's Room, “We are called upon to think of the dead, of those who have been lost forever, in relation to something else—an object, a situation and so on—other than themselves […] We become trapped in the name […] To be sure, there is no escaping the act of naming; there is no escaping the trace our name leaves behind” (74).

“I guess when we named you ‘Kristin’ we were trying to preserve the memory of her life,” my father said recently. “I hope you never thought that we were trying to erase your identity in any way.” “We didn’t name you after her,” my mother once told me. “But we wanted a child named Kristin. We love the name.” My parents’ explanations reveal two different impulses—two ways of undertaking grief-work of their own. Artistically and intellectually innovative elegies, Jacob's Room and Nox similarly endeavor to pay tribute to lives lost too soon.

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Woolf’s “writing of the past as ‘pastiche’ and celebration” (Beer qtd. in Smythe 69).

6 The term “grief-work” in my title and in the above sentence comes from Joan Fleming, who describes the “notebook of memories, artifacts, photographs, and poetry” that eventually became Nox as Carson’s “grief-work for her lost brother, and a meditation on the shape of absence itself” (65).

7 In “Textbook Greek: Thoby Stephen in Jacob’s Room,” Amanda Golden examines the contents of Woolf’s library, particularly Thoby’s books and drawings, to yield fresh insights into the thematic and stylistic innovations of Jacob's Room.

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The Window: Framing Reality in Jacob's Room

In a diary entry for 26 January 1920, when Jacob's Room was just beginning to crystallize in her mind, Woolf recorded the excitement of having conceived “a new form for a new novel” which would follow and improve upon the technique she had already experimented with in her short fiction:

suppose one thing should open out of another—as in An Unwritten Novel—only not for 10 pages but 200 or so—doesn’t that give the looseness & lightness I want: doesn’t that get closer & yet keep form & speed, & enclose everything, everything? My doubt is how far it will enclose the human heart […] For I figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist. […] Whether I’m sufficiently mistress of things—that the doubt; but conceive mark on the wall, K[e]w. G[ardens]. & unwritten novel taking hands & dancing in unity. (Diary of Virginia Woolf 2 13-14)

Previous scholarship has already pointed out how these “fictional reveries” (Dick 1) strongly marked by the presence of the visual, which Woolf herself called “scenes” or “sketches” in her diaries, were often conceived as exercises in style and method leading to her mature novels. However, the excerpt quoted above also condenses most of the elements of continuity linking “The Mark on the Wall,” “Kew Gardens,” and “An Unwritten Novel” to Jacob’s Room, first and foremost the loose association of scenes characterizing a narrative which is all-inclusive and, at the same time, formally controlled. Furthermore, both the short stories and Woolf’s first experimental novel can be considered as epistemological/phenomenological studies of perception, where the mind of the unidentified narrator is engaged in a process of apprehension of the external world, and a sort of osmosis between consciousness and reality is constantly enacted mainly through visual perception, resulting in a succession of narrative frames.

In the shorter fiction the elusiveness of the perceived object and the consequent lack of knowledge are counterbalanced by a vivid
imagination which triggers the reveries, thus originating a series of framed pictures where “hybridity stands at the center of it all, with its haziness, fluidity and openness” (Louvel 2). On the contrary, in Jacob’s Room the enigmatic narrator does not seem to rely on imaginative faculties and repeatedly denounces the possibility of attaining univocal knowledge of facts and events, or capturing the essence of the fictional character, famously declaring that:

nobody sees any one as he is, let alone an elderly lady sitting opposite a strange young man in a railway carriage. [...] One must do the best one can with her report. Anyhow, this was Jacob Flanders, aged nineteen. It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done. (Jacob’s Room [JR] 28-29)

This passage is even more instructive if read in contrast with what happens precisely in “An Unwritten Novel,” where the narrator, sitting opposite a strange lady in a railway carriage, imaginatively constructs a story about her, which is the short story we are reading, thus enacting and self-consciously unveiling the process of literary creation. As a consequence, the framed scene in Jacob’s Room often becomes static and attempts to arrest both the flow of life and the shadowy figure of the protagonist to attain knowledge mediated by perception, thus foregrounding a dichotomy between inner and outer, consciousness and reality. As Francesca Kazan has pointed out in a seminal study:

in this way life and art are constantly juxtaposed, not to merge and dissolve into union, but to reiterate their perpetual relation. With the figure of Jacob Flanders this practice is extended: more sculptural object than human subject, he serves as a mediator linking the world of life and the world of art, for a time blurring the boundaries that divide them even as his iconic presence remains fixed. (701-02).

These remarks, moreover, hark back to Woolf’s early musings on Jacob’s Room in her diary, where art and life, both “form” and “the human heart” interact in a series of fluctuations. More precisely, the novel which is still to be written is envisaged through the language of architectonics (“scaffolding,” “brick”), but also contains, coexisting in a system of exchange and reversal, life and emotions (“heart,” “passion,” “humour”).

As scholars such as Ruth Miller and Marilyn Kurtz have demonstrated, images of frames and glass represent basic tropes playing a significant role in Woolf’s fiction. I would also add that these are frequently used to reveal the nature of things in an act of visual perception, conceived as a tenuous point of connection/disjunction between the inner and the outer worlds, or the essence of a scene or character which is the object of scrutiny. For such reasons, framing and reflective/transparent devices provide not only repeated themes but also structural frameworks to her novels (in so far as they delineate the disputed border between life and art), as well as a metaphor for the act of literary creation, a symbolic materiality which reflects on the materiality of the text. Trying to extend the critical panorama to date, mostly focusing on Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse (see Kendzora, Handley, Nussbaum), this essay aims to explore the window, frame, and glass motifs as recurrent elements in Jacob’s Room, in an attempt to see how they function variously as a surface upon/within which the self might be reflected or envisioned, and as a structural metaphor for the very process of writing. The fact that the novel consists of a series of framed scenes, and that the text is arranged in discrete bordered blocks, has not escaped the attention of previous scholars, especially those engaged in “visual” and “pictorial” readings of Woolf’s fiction (see Stevanato). However, this structural aspect merely represents a primary, clearly visible, level of framing, embedding a secondary level of framing, which becomes manifest in the reading when descriptive passages or tableaux vivants temporarily arrest the shift of perspectives and the polyphony of disembodied voices in a moment of stillness. What I am particularly interested in, however, is the presence—on a both thematic and formal level—of framing devices like windows as liminal spaces, along with their function as expedients for enclosing reality and the character, in an attempt to attain knowledge mediated by visual perception.

Woolf’s aesthetics foreground vision as a theme and creative strategy of the text. In Jacob’s Room, a figure standing at a window is usually engaged in an act of perception where interior and exterior may reflect each other in a static scene, through the glass or the very organ of sight: “Mrs. Flanders [...] looked out of the window. Little windows, and the lilac and green of the garden were reflected in her eyes” (JR 27). Sometimes the point of view is located outside and the vision is directed inward, but the picture framed by the window is an incomplete snapshot, with consequent epistemic uncertainty:

there was a sofa, chairs, a square table, and the window being open, one could see how they sat—legs issuing here, one there crumpled in a corner of the sofa; and, presumably, for you could not see him, somebody stood by the fender, talking. Anyhow, Jacob, who sat astride a chair and ate dates from a long box, burst out laughing. [...] A step or two beyond the window there was nothing at all. (JR 42-43).

Moreover, Woolf relies on frames to illuminate the unescapably shadowy, two-dimensional quality of the fictional character and to emphasize her struggle to represent the self in a narrative text. As the narrator self-consciously remarks:

it seems that a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown. [...] In any case life is but a procession of shadows, and God knows why it is that we embrace them so eagerly, and see them depart with such anguish, being shadows. And why, if this and much more than this is true, why are we yet surprised in the window corner by a sudden vision that the young man in the chair is of all things in the world the most real, the most solid, the best known to us—why indeed? For the moment after we know nothing about him. (JR 70-71)

Throughout the novel, the sequence of formal units and the centrality of the room even from the title highlight the value of window frames—clearly a metaphor for perception limited by material boundaries—which has been partially overlooked by previous criticism.

A possible exception is represented by Claudia Olk, who maintains that “in Jacob’s Room the window is used as a formal device to express the opposition between motion and standstill as well as the contrast between inside and outside, life and lifelessness” (66). Such remarks are particularly relevant to my attempt here to read frames and windows as describing the condition of human existence circumscribed and brought to a halt and, in particular, as arresting the life of an individual in a limited, momentary and superficial picture. Moreover, the static quality of these framed glimpses of Jacob calls to mind the pervasiveness of snapshot aesthetics in Woolf’s fiction and her frequent use of photographic techniques, something which the author seems to have had in mind since her early conception of the novel, and which paved the way for subsequent scholarly interest in the subject. It is particularly noteworthy that, in her holograph notebook dated 15 April 1920, Woolf records her “reflections upon beginning a work of fiction to be called, perhaps, Jacob’s Room” and gives voice to her concern about structural and formal issues: “I think the main point is that it should be free. Yet what about form? Let us suppose that the Room will hold it together. Intensity of life compared with immobility” (Bishop 1).

In the novel, the vision of Jacob at the window sometimes serves to emphasize the contrast between movement in the scene outside and stillness inside: “now Jacob walked over to the window and stood with his hands in his pockets. Mr. Springett opposite came out, looked at his shop window, and went in again. The children drifted past, eyeing the pink sticks of sweetstuff. Pickford’s van swung down the street. A
small boy twirled from a rope. Jacob turned away” (JR 115). In another revealing excerpt Jacob is foregrounded through a visual process of illumination and framing; however, the passage from darkness into light approximates not only pictorial techniques, as early commentators have pointed out, but especially photographic ones, since the view of the character enclosed by the window frame is static and frozen into lifelessness: “Jacob came out from the dark place by the window where he had hovered. The light poured over him, illuminating every cranney of his skin; but not a muscle of his face moved as he sat looking out into the garden” (JR 59-60). In this extract, light drenching an immobilized character through a framing device that ultimately fails to clarify his true essence and his mind, which remain hidden from the observer, bears a striking resemblance to the final scene of “The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection,” one of Woolf’s prose sketches that “experiment[s] with the features of vision” in order to “radically reframe the visible world” (Humm 5). In both cases, the stiff artificiality of the “photographic” image, contrasting with the sheer vitality outside its frame, recalls what Walter Benjamin termed, in his essay “Little History of Photography,” the loss of “aura” of the work of art in the age of its mechanical reproduction, a loss which in the case of photography is partially counterbalanced by the revelation of the so-called “optical unconscious.”

The window in Jacob’s Room creates a dichotomy between inner and outer space of rooms, buildings, and carriages, but also shifts perspectives inside and outside the character’s mind:

Plato’s argument is stowed away in Jacob’s mind, and for five minutes Jacob’s mind continues alone, onwards, into the darkness. Then, getting up, he parted the curtains, and saw, with astonishing clearness, how the Springetts opposite had gone to bed; how it rained; how the Jews and the foreign woman, at the end of the street, stood by the pillar-box, arguing. (JR 109)

The window frame is mainly employed to enclose and relate different glimpses of Jacob in a continuous contraction or expansion of focus, and shift of viewpoints. The novel ultimately shows the impossibility of reaching a stable, univocal image of the protagonist, although looking out of the window may occasionally provide visual perceptions generating moments of introspection, albeit partial and transitory:

Jacob went to the window and stood with his hands in his pockets. There he saw three Greeks in kilts; the masts of ships; idle or busy people of the lower classes strolling or stepping out briskly, or falling into groups and gesticulating with their hands. Their lack of concern for him was not the cause of his gloom; but some more profound conviction—it was not that he himself happened to be lonely, but that all people are. (JR 139-40)

In the final scene, Jacob’s inner void, symbolized throughout the novel by his empty room, becomes real, as shown by his empty old shoes. After Jacob’s death, Richard Bonamy’s glance out of the window reveals a sharp contrast between the urban scene outside, swarming with life and movement, and the lifelessness and stillness inside, where his desperate cry remains unanswered:

Bonamy crossed to the window. Pickford’s van swung down the street. The omnibuses were locked together at Mudie’s corner. Engines throbbed, and carters, jamming the brakes down, pulled their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to raise their horses sharp up. A harsh and unhappy voice cried something unintelligible. And then suddenly all the leaves seemed to ra

Diane Gillespie has interestingly remarked that framed images of characters in Woolf’s fiction serve two possible functions: they “can ruthlessly expose the vacuum at the center of an individual’s life,” as it happens for example with the protagonist of “The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection,” or, like a magnifying glass, “they can reveal depths and inner riches not usually perceptible” (217). Despite Woolf’s persistent use of frames and glass imagery as a structural and formal device, in Jacob’s Room windows visually represent a moment of the narrative in which characters are never wholly revealed but perhaps only their outside is shown through visual perception, thus foregrounding the novel’s central problem of how to know the unknowable or represent the unrepresentable.

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“chasms in the continuity of our ways”: Queering Domesticity in Jacob’s Room and To the Lighthouse

The strange thing about life is that though the nature of it must have been apparent to every one for hundreds of years, no one has left any adequate account of it. The streets of London have their map, but our passions are uncharted. What are you going to meet if you turn this corner?

“Holborn straight ahead of you,” says the policeman. Ah, but where are you going if instead of brushing past the old man with the white beard, the silver medal, and the cheap violin, you let him go on with his story, which ends in an invitation to step somewhere, to
his room, presumably, off Queen’s Square, and there he shows you a collection of bird’s eggs and a letter from the Prince of Wales’s secretary, and this (skipping the intermediate stages) brings you one winter’s day to the Essex coast, where the little boat makes off to the ship, and the ship sails and you behold on the skyline the Azores; and the flamingoes rise, and there you sit on the verge of the marsh drinking rum-punch, an outcast from civilization, for you have committed a crime, are infected with yellow fever as likely as not, and—fill in the sketch as you like.

As frequent as street corners in Holborn are these chasms in the continuity of our ways. Yet we keep straight on. (75-76)

In this passage, midway through Woolf’s 1922 novel Jacob’s Room, the narrator introduces two linked and opposing metaphors: “chasms” and “continuity.” Whereas following “the continuity of our ways” means to “keep straight on”—to Holborn, to Oxford, to the path set out for us, exploring the “chasms”—gaps, openings, turnings, the unplanned, the unexpected—leads perhaps to risk and danger but also to a richer experience of adventure in a new world. The narrator imagines the transformative potential of an unplanned visit to a stranger’s domestic space, figuring it as a kind of chasmatic encounter that is, she suggests, too often missed or avoided.

This moment, with its endorsement of life lived by stepping into chasms, its celebration of the dangerous and life-changing possibilities of taking a turning rather than keeping straight, is importantly and productively queer. As the story situates the chasm in the old man’s room, this queer moment becomes also, and unusually, domestic. I suggest that this brief illustration of what it means to follow the chasm instead of continuity invites us to read Jacob’s Room as a queer revision of domestic narratives, one that initiates a queer mode of domestic storytelling that resonates across Woolf’s work. Such a perspective provides a new link between this seemingly undomestic text and one of Woolf’s most clearly domestic novels, To the Lighthouse.

Throughout her work, Woolf is keenly attuned to domestic rhythms. As Victoria Rosner argues, “no other major novelist of the period was so preoccupied with the critique of Victorian domesticity or so explicit about the relationship of literary modernism to the changing nature of private life” (15). In Woolf’s work, domestic space is of primary importance, presented not as a respite from the demands of the modern world but as itself a site of modernity, where the new “human relations” occasioned by the change in human character she describes in “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” will be worked out (96). Woolf’s engagement with domesticity throughout her writing is most definitely, as Rosner argues, critical, and it is also queer. Woolf’s rendering of domesticity presents readers with domestic spaces—and the novelistic forms that represent them to us—to find queer encounters embedded therein. Woolf asks readers to see everyday life from a queer perspective, to look for the chasms that can help us reenvision the rooms we enter and those people we enter them with.

“Queer” has a vexed relationship with conceptions of the ordinary and the everyday, again concretized in the domestic. While “queer” has become a familiar modifier of “modernism,” to the point that Heather Love could argue that “of all the forms of marginal modernism that have surfaced in the past couple of decades, queer modernism seems particularly likely to merge into modernism proper” (744), its relationship with ordinariness and domesticity still remains problematic. “Queer” has long signaled deviance, with its connotations of strangeness, peculiarity, whether or not the term has been used as a weapon or embraced as an identity—and even as queerness becomes increasingly visible and recognizable. Political and social opposition to queer people has often been framed in terms of a protection of “traditional” domesticity. In both the United States and (much, though not all, of) the United Kingdom, the arguments that ultimately succeeded in winning a right to same-sex marriage that centered not on the extraordinariness of the queer plaintiffs, but on the extraordinariness of the discrimination faced by them and by other legally married queers—an argument rooted in a concept of queer domestic life as fundamentally “normal” and “ordinary,” “just like any other marriage.” Such arguments underscore the degree to which married queers have become the dominant and normative image of queer domesticity, both for those who advocate for an expansion of gay marriage rights and those who argue against it, both straight and queer.

Clearly, while both Jacob’s Room and To the Lighthouse are deeply concerned with the social and individual drive towards marriage, neither imagine gay marriage as it is understood now. But these novels offer opportunities to think through queer domesticity and the relationships between queerness and everyday life that are not necessarily reducible to the equation of domesticity and marriage. As much as gay marriage has come to be equated with queer domesticity, they overlap rather than define each other. As Nayan Shah has argued, “Exploring deviant sexualities and queer domesticities allows us to conceive of alternatives that do not funnel all valued erotic and sensual relations into heterosexual marriage and reproduction” (78-79). Woolf’s work offers an opportunity for a sincere engagement with questions of what is at stake when we equate the ordinary with the normative. Her narratives present us with images of domestic life and her critique of those images simultaneously, and her critique queers domesticity in richly provocative ways with significant potential for expanding our understanding of the intersections of modernism, queerness, and domesticity.

Laura Doyle argues in Freedom’s Empire that:

> In Woolf’s novels [...] ruin on the seas of empire expresses the loss not only of an innocent or unviolated self but also of a certain possibility, a certain other way of being among stones, jars, and books that is not thoroughly regulated by racial empire and its brotherly, heterosexual republics—a luxuriously queer way of being. (418)

While Doyle’s argument ranges across transatlantic space, that luxuriously queer way of being also locates itself in domestic space and in narrative shapes. In the puzzling, experimental form of Jacob’s Room, and later—perhaps more optimistically—in the tripartite structure of To the Lighthouse, Woolf crafts narrative form around chasms that also serve as sites of queer encounter. While Woolf introduces the concept of the chasm with a story involving flaneur-esque street wanderings, the chasm itself opens up when “you” step into the stranger’s room. If the chasm is most profoundly experienced through the home, that should alert us to the domestic chasms we might otherwise walk by as blithely as we stroll through Holborn. In different ways both Jacob’s Room and To the Lighthouse highlight domestic chasms, points where the domestic becomes unfamiliar, where we are encouraged to see it anew. These moments are often linked with characters who are explicitly or implicitly queer sexually (Richard Bonamy in Jacob’s Room; Augustus Carmichael and Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse)—guests who attempt to find a place for themselves in a space not their home. Woolf’s queery domestic narratives explore the “chasms in the continuity of our ways” (JR 76) that appear as queer spaces and times built into Woolf’s experimental narrative structure. The metaphor of the chasm opens up Woolf’s engagement with experiences of time and space that are non-normative and yet also ordinary and helps to outline her mode of queering domesticity.

Without reading the chasm narrative specifically, Kimberly Engdahl Coates sees the queer moments in Jacob’s Room as “transcending the spatial confines of both genre and domesticity and troubling the linear and heteronormative temporality of the marriage plot” (279). The way to think about queer domesticity, these novels suggest, is to move through domestic spaces and the relationships they engender and...
elide, rather than to look at domesticity as deriving from and coeval to marriage (whether straight or gay). In To the Lighthouse, this revision of domesticity begins with Mrs. Ramsay’s “uneasy” feeling about her own domestic mantra—“people must marry, people must have children” (63)—and develops further when Lily, seated at the domestic dinner table, commits herself to her art and turns off the continuity of most women’s ways toward marriage. Even though the words “chasm” and “continuity” do not appear in To the Lighthouse, the novel clearly portrays the drive towards heteronormative marital domesticity and the disruptive potential of queering that path. I suggest that Lily’s realization—“she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution. She would move the tree rather more to the middle” (104)—shows, to use the language of Jacob’s Room, a willingness to step into the chasms rather than to keep straight on. Yet although Lily rejects the kind of marriage embodied by Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, she does not reject domestic life; instead domestic life remains the inspiration for and the source of her art. Lily moves the salt cellar on the table and thinks about her painting in which “a mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence” (56).

Jacob’s Room presents domesticity queerly—at a slant, off to the side, indirectly, and also inflected by homosociality, obliquely referenced same-sex desire, and the staying power of the image of undomesticated sexuality Jacob encounters in the novel’s opening moments. (That scene of sex on the beach that Jacob witnesses as a child has its clearest echo not in any of Jacob’s heterosexual encounters but while on the boat with Timmy Durrant.) The novel’s title signals the importance of a particular domestic space crucial to Woolf’s own domestic vision and her key metaphor for taking control of one’s professional, and particularly artistic, identity. But while critics since Arnold Bennett have noted and analyzed Jacob’s opacity, few have commented on the similar unreadability of his room(s), and what that might signal for Woolf’s new experimental vision. The room of Jacob’s which we are allowed to see most clearly appears in the novel’s final scene after Jacob’s death in the company of the explicitly queer figure of Bonamy. In short, it seems a stretch to call Jacob’s Room a “domestic novel”: its protagonist is male, unmarried, cut down before he is able to settle permanently into a “room of his own,” despite the novel’s title. But we can also read this novel as domesticity seen queerly, encouraging readers to perceive how Jacob’s march towards the social ideal of marital domesticity places him in the service of marital domesticity instead.

While both Jacob’s Room and To the Lighthouse depict sexually queer characters and circle around significant domestic spaces, they also situate these characters and spaces within the extraordinarily ordinary context of World War I. Woolf defines that conflict not through its battles but in its impact on domestic life, and tasks her queer characters with envisioning how home life is to go on in the wake of war’s losses. In Jacob’s Room Flanders is a field of war, but first it is a family name; the catalyzism of Andrew Ramsay’s death in To the Lighthouse is bracketed off while the narrative focuses on the decay and regeneration of the family house. War, in Woolf’s rendering, is the anti-chasm. The trenched in which Andrew Ramsay is blown to his death in To the Lighthouse, and in which Jacob Flanders too most likely met his end, are not transformative chasms but instead the culmination of an unquestioned “continuity of our ways,” as set out by those “sixteen gentlemen,” government ministers who “decreed that the course of history should shape itself this way or that way” (JR 139) and led the nation into war. As internationally traumatic as this way to international war will be, thanks to Woolf’s deep understanding of the relation between the private domestic space of the home and the public domestic space of the nation, we understand both the domestic loss it occasions and the queer, chasmatic perspective that allows us to see it. War’s inescapably domestic disruptions are most evocatively presented in Mrs. Flanders’s unanswerable question, posed to Jacob’s queer friend Bonamy, about her dead son’s empty shoes. Bonamy, the “dark horse” (124), who “couldn’t love a woman” (111) and “was fonder of Jacob than of any one in the world” (112), cannot step into Jacob’s shoes. The story of Jacob Flanders’s life and death marks his progress towards compulsory heterosexuality: his initial “violent reversion towards male society” when confronted with “indecency […] in the raw” (64) over time turns to an inability to write to Bonamy while in love with Sandra Wentworth Williams, noting that “there was something queer about it” (118). In contrast, the space in which Woolf’s older, mourning narrator places Jacob’s story alludes to another kind of ordinariness, a queer ordinary, a chasmatic mode of existence that is destroyed by the push to war. Jacob’s Room focuses on the frustrating loss of potential occasioned by refusing opportunities to step off the continuous path. It is the tragedy of not following the chasms, but of keeping straight on, which, in this novel, leads to Jacob’s death and leaves his survivors bereft.

Jacob’s Room confronts the emptiness of a domesticity that marginalizes queerness, but To the Lighthouse tries to imagine how queerness might be revealed in the wake of familial and national losses. The later novel is explicitly domestic, and so is the painting Lily Briscoe struggles to create over the course of the text. “The Window” demonstrates the complicated pull that normative domesticity exerts on nearly all those who come in contact with it. As a guest of the Ramsay family both before and after the war, Lily Briscoe has a room, but it is not one of her own; she paints outside of the house but makes domestic relationships the subject of her art. The novel as a whole and Lily as a character are more clearly imbricated in a queer critique of domestic space; we see the Ramsay family both from within Mrs. Ramsay’s perspective and through Lily’s outsider vision, at times passionately “in love” (23) with Mrs. Ramsay and at others deeply critical. Lily is well aware of the limitations of her own domestic existence as the novel begins—her sense of “her own inadequacy, her insignificance” is inextricable from her maiden-daughter responsibilities, “keeping house for her father off the Brompton road” (23). When Mrs. Ramsay and those most publicly imbricated in heteronormativity—the bride and mother-to-be, Prue; Andrew, the soldier—all die in the midst of the war, the story continues but cannot be the same. Who will inhabit the restored but changed domestic realm, as the text turns its attention to those who don’t fit into the heteronormative space? Despite Lily’s rejection of Mrs. Ramsay’s specific marital maneuvering on her behalf and, more boldly, the explicit link Lily draws between artistic creation and a recognition that the heteronormative story of domesticity is unnecessary—“she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody”—the story loses something queer about it (179).—Lily’s queer modernist art is less a wholesale rejection of the domestic than a revision of it.

As Matt Franks argues in “Mrs. Ramsay’s Queer Generationality,” a reading of Lily’s completion of her painting as the moment when she transcends her Victorian domestic vision is mistaken. Lily’s “queer, modernist vision,” he explains, “stages [Mrs. Ramsay’s] incorporation and synchronic presence through lesbian desire” (16) in a way that reconfigures, and does not erase, domesticity. Jacob’s Room introduces the chasm as a space of possible transformation but ultimately presents readers with the loss and emptiness that follows when Jacob keeps straight on the path to war. To the Lighthouse envisions, through its structure and focus on Lily’s queer character, what happens to home and to art when someone does not keep straight on. Instead Lily, the queer female artist, and Woolf, the modernist writer, both use a domestically centered art as a means to acknowledge—and to try to follow—the queer chasms that disrupt and transform the ordinary continuity of our ways.

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The narrator’s being female speaks to Makiko Minow-Pinkney’s remark that “for Woolf […] aesthetic innovation and feminist conviction are deeply interlinked” (7). The explicitly female narrator who cannot gain access to her male characters represents Woolf’s feminist conviction regarding women being barred from educational institutions. This of course is a sentiment Woolf later addresses again, in another form, in A Room of One’s Own. The time frame of Jacob’s Room is primarily post-1900, and the University of London began granting degrees to women in 1878, the same year that Lady Margaret Hall, the first college at Oxford University that admitted women, was founded. But the majority of colleges of higher education in England still did not welcome women students at the time when Woolf was writing the novel, and most women did not attend college at all.

Shortly after the narrator’s description of the young men in their halls in Jacob’s Room, the narrator embarks on a series of questions that reiterates her exclusion from the male world of Cambridge. Of the male conversation, she has to ask if theirs was an argument, a bet on the boat races, or nothing of the sort. When she refers to the male space as “the twilight room” (36), she deepens her portrait of this most shadowy and mysterious realm, and her own distance from it. The narrator then begins her depiction of how this all-male world is not only exclusive and thus excluding, but woefully out of touch with the working class, and working women in particular. The chimneys, roofs, and bricks of Cambridge dissolve into the “bare hills of Turkey,” where women stand “naked-legged in the stream to beat linen on the stones” (36). The stream’s water forms loops around the women’s ankles, in an image that harkens to shackles. The narrator then writes that, although this precise description of another place has been given, “none of that could show clearly through the swaddlings and blanketings of the Cambridge night” (36). Images and language pertaining to infants—swaddlings and blanketings—highlight the differences between the cushy and comfortable male world of Cambridge with the grueling existence of the Turkish women.

The fact that this world where women are working outdoors, is invisible to the coddled Cambridge men both highlights the gulf between these realms and questions the system of education in which such labor goes unseen. The Turkish women Woolf mentions are not just women working nearby; physically, they are thousands of miles away from the university campus. The narrator suddenly describes a scene at such a vast geographical distance to highlight the disparity of these social conditions and ways of life. As “the clock pursed softly round” Jacob, he smokes a pipe, and looks “satisfied; indeed masterly” (36). Instead of awakening Jacob to the range of human experiences extant in the world, his elite education conveys to him a rather blind sense of entitlement. Cambridge

1 Kate Flint in “Revising Jacob’s Room” looks at the “ironic distance” between the novel’s narrator and Jacob, considering the effect of the “woman’s narrative voice from the male persona” (265).

2 As Celia Marshik remarks, “There is evidence that Woolf revised [Jacob’s Room] to emphasize the gendered difference between the education levels of Jacob and Florinda. In the manuscript, Jacob lends a Jane Austen novel to the prostitute. By making the switch from Austen to Shelley, Woolf emphasizes the masculine nature of English literature and of the culture of prewar Britain” (870). Originally, Woolf had Jacob give Florinda a book by Percy Bysshe Shelley. I would add that this revision suggests a critique of education in prewar Britain as being men teaching men, a critique that university men read books by other men. One thinks of a reference to a woman author that did make it into the final draft: in Jacob’s room, in addition to his collection of books by male authors, are the “works of Jane Austen, too, in deference, perhaps, to some one else’s standard” (31). Austen does not meet Jacob’s standard; more fitting to him are the lives “of the Duke of Wellington […] Spinoza; the works of Dickens” (31). That Jacob ultimately scorns Florinda for being “brainless” (68) demonstrates Woolf’s sense of the fallacy of men scorning women for what they perceive as a lack of education, when in fact women were and are largely barred from said education.
conveys to him “a sense of old buildings and time; and himself the inheritor; and then to-morrow” (36). Jacob’s swaddling education makes him believe that both he and his “friends” possess an ages-old mystery that will extend into the future. Unseen to him and Cambridge men at large are those women working in the stream in Turkey. Thus the swaddlings in which Cambridge men are enwrapped are at once blankets and a blindfold. Education does not open Jacob’s eyes to class differences (and the systems of hegemony that perpetuate them) but instead reifies his belief in his own superiority.

A similar illustration of a privileged male space appears in a later scene in a residence close to Covent Garden, where an old woman named Mrs. Papworth keeps house for one of Jacob’s Cambridge friends, Richard Bonamy. The old woman, a mother of three still-born babies, described as having a “sinking” eyelid, washes Mr. Bonamy’s dishes. She overhears her employer speaking with a male friend; she notes “the young gentlemen talking in the room next door” (87). Mrs. Papworth is outside of the room where the men are; like the female narrator, she is excluded from decidedly male spaces, has to surmise what is causing noises in the other room (“heard something—might be the little table by the fire—fall; and then stamp, stamp, stamp—as if they were having at each other” [88]). In addition to having to guess precisely what is happening in the male space, Mrs. Papworth is not privy to the conversation between the men and can only hear snippets of it. She does not get to participate in the conversation, but instead privately chooses the person whose argument she supports. The old woman’s lowly work cleaning the dishes in the sink with her “purple, almost nailless hands” contrasts with the highfaltering “very long words” the men use as products of their “book learning.” This dichotomy between working women and educated men echoes the earlier scene contrasting Turkey with Cambridge. This time, instead of using physical distance to highlight the disparity between social situations, Woolf utilizes erudite language (expressive of the men’s social stature) in contrast with working-class British dialect that suggests a certain lack of education: “He don’t give Bonamy a chance.” Mrs. Papworth thinks, overhearing the argument between the men (88).

The type of labor in which Mrs. Papworth engages is by no means confined to an upper-class private residence; across London, in various industries and professional capacities, women serve men. In the Express Dairy Company’s shop, which is managed entirely by women, women are waitresses and cashiers, delivering and ringing up plates of eggs on toast, coffee, and pie (103-04). The shop’s connection with dairy suggests traditional women’s roles, roles as caregivers and providers, roles of nurturing. That the shop is a scene of endless work—with the women “grumbl[ing],” “cr[y]ing!” out, using “sharp voices” (103)—suggests Woolf’s critique of said traditional roles. The lone man in the shop (the sole male mentioned and afforded description) is a customer, aloof to the tireless work being performed around him: “the coal merchant read the Telegraph without stopping, missed the saucer, and, feeling abstractedly, put the cup down on the tablecloth” (104).

The cashier’s hands with fingers “swollen as sausages” (103) echo the “purple, almost nailless hands” of Mrs. Papworth, washing the dishes in the flat near Covent Garden. The constant opening and shutting of the dairy shop door—“Oh, that door!” (103); “The door opened and shut” (104)—speaks to the relentless demands upon these working women. The constantly opening-and-closing door is also an image that suggests a door is slamming in women’s faces.3

3 The image of a door slamming in women’s faces anticipates Three Guineas, particularly a passage concerned with male education and privileged male spaces: “What is that congregation of buildings there, with a semi-monastic look, with chapels and halls and green playing-fields? To you it is your old school; Eton or Harrow; your old university, Oxford or Cambridge; the source of memories and traditions innumerable. But to us, who see it through the shadow of Arthur’s Education Fund, it is a schoolroom table; an omnibus going to a class; a little woman with a red nose who is not well educated herself but has an invalid mother to support; an allowance of £50 a year with which to buy clothes, give presents and take journeys on coming to maturity. Such is the effect that Arthur’s

The door image continues to develop weight as a symbol of privilege. To be able to close and shut a door for oneself is a luxury afforded mostly to the upper classes. In Chapter Nine, Jacob, who has access to his own living spaces, shuts the door on a private room in a brothel to have sex with the prostitute Laurette, who clearly does not have a living space of her own. Afterward, he leaves shillings on a mantelpiece, then is seen out by Laurette’s “Madame,” who clearly oversees Laurette’s systematic exploitation by various male customers or johns. Like the Turkish women doing their wash in the river and those working in the dairy shop in London, Laurette is working in miserable conditions. The door that, in her world, gets thrust open repeatedly is the door that provides access to her own body. In order for her to make a living, that door has to open, and open, and open. As Jacob’s visit illustrates, the men simply come and go. When he leaves, Jacob is disquieted by the Madame’s gaze upon him, but he does get to leave the brothel. He returns to the world where he has his own private spaces while Laurette goes on, lacking not only a private physical space but even the agency to control the entrance to her own body.

Unlike Mrs. Papworth, Florinda, and Laurette, Sandra Wentworth Williams is a woman of wealth and high social standing, and someone who has many rooms of her own. She has servants and is able to “forget the peasants” (124). She has gardeners who straighten their backs as she passes. She picks roses with the Prime Minister (125). But Woolf delineates the ways in which even a wealthy woman such as Sandra Wentworth Williams is not as privileged as an educated man like Jacob. Mrs. Wentworth Williams is an intellectual dilettante where the men of Cambridge are serious scholars. The depiction of Sandra’s reading and erudition borders on the farcical. At a hotel in Olympia, Greece, she holds a book of Chekhov stories “convenient for travelling” (124). This description of her volume suggests that Mrs. Wentworth Williams, in reading literature, is a visitor to the male territory of knowledge, just as she is a visitor to Greece. Her intelligence reads as not formidable but airy and tenuously inspired, as she thinks, “She seemed to have grasped something. She would write it down.” What she does think of is her own beauty, and her thought, “I am very beautiful” (which comes to her again and again), is layered with the mockingly vague and monumental notion, “Everything seems to mean so much.” When Mrs. Wentworth Williams speaks this particular phrase aloud, her own voice banishes her thoughts about peasants: “Only there remained with her a sense of her own beauty, and in front, luckily, there was a looking-glass” (124).

In this portrait of Sandra Wentworth Williams’s pseudo-intellectual, pseudo-poetic inspiration, Woolf conveys that even if a woman achieves a certain (that is to say, high) social stature, her education is not on par with that of the young men who marched in droves through Oxbridge. Compare Mrs. Wentworth Williams’s lone traveler’s volume of short stories with the substantial library in Jacob’s room at Nevile’s Court, Cambridge, with “the Fairy Queen; a Greek dictionary with the petals of poppies pressed to silk between the pages; all the Elizabethans” (31). The literary wealth of Jacob’s library at an institution of male education far outshines that of the slim volume Sandra Wentworth Williams carries as she travels (124). It is true that nothing is stated about her library, and she does likely have one as she is married to a wealthy man. The point is that Woolf chooses to depict a man at an institution of higher education, surrounded by books, and a woman outside of such an institution, toting around only her lone traveler’s volume. This choice illustrates the immense institutional support provided to men and not to women.4

Education Fund has had upon us. So magically does it change the landscape that the noble courts and quadrangles of Oxford and Cambridge often appear to educated men’s daughters like petticoats with holes in them, cold legs of mutton, and the boat train starting for abroad while the guard slams the door in their faces” (5).

4 It is precisely this type of institutional machinery Woolf is later calling into question in Three Guineas when she presents the photographs of a General, Heralds, a Judge, an Archbishop, and a University Procession. These men hold their titles because of an institutionalized system that catapults men (but not women) into positions of office. Naomi Black argues that the Three Guineas
Indeed, Sandra Wentworth Williams might be a woman of a high social stature, but her resources probably come predominantly from her husband, not her own institutionally-sanctioned education.

If one looks closely, one will glimpse in *Jacob’s Room*, too, the male working class, those who didn’t go to college and serve, in the English countryside, as “ploughmen,” “carpenters,” and “farmers smelling of mud and brandy” (116), or, in Athens, where men herd goats (129)—not every male is as coddled as Jacob Flanders or Richard Bonamy, cocooned in privileged spaces. But when Sue Roe states that with *Jacob’s Room* “Virginia Woolf (with heavy ‘male’ emphasis) yet again reiterates her point that the male literary, historical and philosophical canons are wide-ranging, consistent and endlessly emphasized” (177), she is highlighting the idea that *Jacob’s Room* focuses the majority of its attention on male education. I would agree with this assessment and add to it that Woolf emphasizes such education in *Jacob’s Room* while also emphasizing the dual reality for women mentioned in the novel: many of them are uneducated shopkeepers off Shaftesbury Avenue, sitting over ledgers, drawing long threads “wearily between silk and gauze,” adding up pence and farthings, twisting “the yard and three-quarters in tissue paper and ask[ing] ‘Your pleasure?’ of the next com[er]” (105). Whether their next comer is a randy john seeking the pleasures of a woman’s body in a brothel or a customer seeking a hot bun and tea in a café, the majority of women in *Jacob’s Room* serve and toil relentlessly while most of the men who are mentioned are those immersed in education (and its physical institutions) and able to enjoy the fruits such an education offers. It is true that the end of the bloody First World War, which is an integral part of the novel, heralded a constrained but still triumphant progress toward women’s suffrage; the war empowered women and killed off a vast number of privileged middle and upper class men. Yet when Jacob himself, at the end of the novel, dies in the First World War, Woolf seems to be saying: *What a waste! All that privilege, poured into one form—and then killed in a war. What a waste!*

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photographs point to “the absence of women from the formal ceremonial contexts that attest to public power” (166), and it is true they do this, but they also highlight the systems that engender such ceremonies in the first place. It is not just the ceremony itself that concerns Woolf, but the propensity of major institutions in law, government, the military, and academia to welcome and support men where they do not welcome and support women.
Exhibition spaces have a strange and beguiling quality. Situated in a real place and time, an exhibition is an invitation to be immersed in an imaginary world/space, conjured up by the setting, the building (if there is one), the content of the exhibition itself, and the curator’s vision and design, all filtered through one’s own perceptions and preoccupations. Curators aim to create a sense of presence and connection to another place and time, not merely by displaying artifacts that belonged to a particular artist or a distinctive group but by raising a visceral and emotional fusion with the now through the deliberate evocation of a particular atmosphere.

Intrigued by the promise of the exhibition’s title, I boarded the MS Gustavsberg to look for the Bloomsbury Spirit in the unlikely spaces of the Stockholm archipelago. Aboard the gleaming white decks of the MS Gustavsberg, built in 1912 as a passenger and icebreaker steam ship, we chugged slowly through the narrow inlets and blue waterways of the islands of the archipelago. The sheen of dark wood fittings, shining brass rails, and well-worn wooden steps leading to the upper deck combined with sweet cakes, tea, and coffee served in china cups transported me to another era. The musical boom of the ship’s horn punctured the relative silence and added to my pleasure of being out on the water on a clear, cool but sunny morning. Wondering how Bloomsbury might transfer to Stockholm, I faced into the wind in an old canvas chair on the forward deck, wrapping my hands around a warm cup of coffee with little idea of what lay ahead. Could Bloomsbury be exported beyond a British or, more precisely, a London setting? I recalled the 2014 Virginia Woolf: Art, Life and Vision exhibition held at the National Portrait Gallery in London, the city in which Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group lived, worked, loved, and played. Frances Spalding, curator of that exhibition, described it as “a visual narrative akin to a portrait,” which traced Woolf’s emergence as radical author and her association with Bloomsbury (Spalding, Virginia Woolf 20). Could Bloomsbury, however we constitute it, come alive out in the waters and woods of the Stockholm archipelago? Would this new setting change my perceptions of Bloomsbury? Interspersed with vistas of water, rock, and woodland, these and other musings occupied my mind on the slow boat time (approximately 90 minutes) to Artipelag, when I visited in late August 2018. Crossing the bay of Baggebsjärden, we moored at a small wooden dock, followed a spiral boardwalk through forest and rock, and climbed up towards an aspens and birches. Nearby is Vanessa Bell’s affectionate portrait of Leonard (Leonard Sidney Woolf 1940) absorbed in writing a letter at his desk in Monk’s House. A spaniel is curled up asleep on a seat beside him. The dog ears spread, nose resting on paw, and dreaming repose catch my eye; it is an image within the painting suggesting trust. The fall of light and shade, the soft hues of Leonard’s suit and shirt, the intense red of the carnation on a nearby table invites the viewer to look more closely at this man, deeply engaged in his life’s work. Bell’s portrait of Leonard may be familiar to Woolf scholars and readers as a book cover but to stand and breathe in the texture and color of the art is the pleasure of an exhibition. Vanessa’s portrait of Leonard was completed for her sister the year before Virginia’s death (Spalding, Vanessa Bell 321). A Garden Scene (Bell 1925), Studland Beach (Bell 1912), Portrait of Mrs St John Hutchinson (Bell 1915), Chrysanthemums (Bell 1920), The Queen of Sheba (Grant 1912), Head of Eve (Grant 1913), Venus and Adonis (Grant 1919), Landscape Sussex (Grant 1920), Lady Ottoline Morrell (Bussy 1920), River with Poplars (Fry 1912), Still Life Flowers (Fry 1912), Still Life with Coffee Pot (Fry 1915) and Essay in Abstract Design (Fry 1915) were also featured in the exhibition. Bloomsbury’s spirit was indeed on display and the combined effect of the art, subjects, and the tangible presence of the creative spirits in the room were almost overwhelming.

Portraits and artifacts were not confined to the Grafton Gallery; Bell’s Portrait of David Garnett (1915) lit up the green wall of a lightly embalmed Charleston bathroom. The artworks were an intrinsic aspect of the separate room installations, with deliberately arranged and designed interiors sequenced to build the mesmerizing and otherworldly atmosphere of the exhibition. Freed from the traditional museum practice of presenting objects in glass cases, artifacts and paintings were placed within the environments in which they were created. The absence of an exhibition catalogue for the artwork was initially puzzling but began to make sense as I visited each installation. Bloomsbury Spirit comprised eight distinctive spaces: the Grafton Galleries, the Cadena Café, Omega Workshops, Charleston, The Ballet Russes and India, Carrington and Strachey at Ham Spray, the Hogarth Press and Garsington, circumnavigated by a wide pale corridor with information panels. There, luminous, translucent installation style paintings by Karen Gabel Madsen transported visitors from the reading room in the British Library or King’s Cross Station to the lush gardens reminiscent of those at Charleston or Monk’s House. The painting of the Southeast Bridge at the River Ouse summoned more somber thoughts. Madsen states that she was inspired by the free and wild ways of the Bloomsbury Group, and

amber with lichen-green-grey waist-high wood paneling. Paintings by Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Henry Lamb pulsed with color and atmosphere, calling up the distinctiveness of each artistic personality and deeply diverse interests in people, work, and place. Eighteen paintings filled the room, though a sense of spaciousness pervaded; pale white script on the floor identified the artist, date, and provenance of each work. Fry’s portrait painting, Clive Bell (1924) and his self-portrait (1930-1934) stand alongside his copy of Cézanne’s self-portrait (1925), each man’s gaze in the painting directed at both the artist and viewer. Inside the door of the recreated Grafton Gallery space, Henry Lamb’s monumental portrait Lytton Strachey (1914) dominates, partly due to size and scale but also the darkening paint. In the painting, Strachey is comfortably perched on a cane armchair covered with a rug and cushions, his long legs displaced and trailing across the floor, elbow resting on the chair arm, left hand clasping the right. His back is to a large window with a winter garden background in which two black-cloaked figures walk, accompanied by a small white dog. I noticed Strachey’s red beard, quizzical eyebrows, spectacles, and a lost-in-thought stare. A black, rolled umbrella and broad brimmed hat resting on a chair to the right completed the portrait. Despite its size, a sense of intimacy is conveyed in Lamb’s portrait of his eminent friend.
their clear idealism that placed more value on “friendship, the honest profound conversation and sexual openness” over money and careers (Andersson 30).

The Omega Workshops and Cadena Café were inspired by Fry’s Omega chairs and by Grant’s lily pond tables, the latter of which were a popular Omega product. Judith Collins states that Fry advised Grant to “take the pots and pour some colour straight onto the table top so that lilies, leaves, goldfish and water all become random pools of colour” (Collins qtd. in Shone, The Art of Bloomsbury 141). Shone considers it “one of Grant’s most spectacular inventions and prefigures the marbling technique he later developed” (141). The Cadena Café pays homage to Grant’s distinctive design and creative work but is clearly part of the collaborative and unrestrained excitement of working with other artists producing designs for pottery, furniture, textiles, wall screens, printed fabrics, carpets, and wall paper. Contemporary artist Tor von Geijer recreated the high paper border from a black and white reproduction, accentuating details and colors. Pink, yellow, brown, and gray were splattered above grey wood paneling and head high photographs of Bloomsbury from the Houghton Library collection. For von Geijer, the appeal of the Bloomsbury Group is in “their artistic candour (a lot of flowers), intimacy and desire for beauty” (Andersson 31). I sat on a red lacquered cane Omega chair with a Byzantine wooden circle headrest and browsed the books scattered across the decorated tables while imagining café society encounters and conversations. Omega-inspired floor rugs added a sense of invitation for visitors to sit. I leafed through recent editions of Fry’s 1920 Vision and Design, Aldous Huxley’s 1921 Crome Yellow, and Virginia Woolf’s Kew Gardens (1919, 1921), as well contemporary Bloomsbury literature such as The Bloomsbury Group Memoir Club (2016) by S. P. Rosenbaum and James Haule, Lisbeth Larsson’s Promende I Virginia Woolfs London (2014), Frances Spalding’s biography of Duncan Grant (1997), The Art of Dora Carrington (1994) by Jane Hill, and Queer Bloomsbury (2016), edited by Brenda Helt and Madelyn Detloff. An abundance of items were displayed in the Omega Workshops, some placed on a podium and others illuminated by exceptional lighting, contrasting light and dark, creating spaces between the swirling patterned environment. The Omega signboard by Grant (1913) hung high above a doorway. One of the most alluring compositions in the Omega room was created by a dark wood wardrobe, with painted white daisies on large red discs in a pale and dark green verdant background, accompanied by a water-lily table (Grant 1913) and slightly worn, leather Omega chair, with colorful cross-stitch work of russet red blooms and leaves in a pot. On the wall behind was Fry’s 1914 design scheme for the Café. The Omega workshop artists—commissioned for their eclectic and vibrant mix of fabrics, furnishings, objects, and mural paintings—transferred their art to walls, ceilings, and floors as depicted in this corner of the exhibition. The legacy of Bloomsbury art and literature was tangible in this contemplative space that offered a glimpse as to what might have motivated and inspired these unapologetic and courageous companions.

Across the garden in the artists studio, two self-portraits commanded my attention. I made contact with Grant’s otherworldly grey-blue eyes in both of his youthful self-portraits, one displayed on an easel (1910) and the other, Self Portrait in a Turban (1909-1910) hung on the blue painted wall. Brushes were gathered in a tin on a window ledge and tall stools waited for the artist. But, of course, the artists were not there and the studio was pristine. There were no paint spattered clothes or the lingering smell of linseed. This was not an attempt to reproduce the rooms of Charleston. The importance given to unembellished spaces throughout the exhibition was strangely effective in conjuring up my sense of the studio but it was in the kitchen installation that the instinctive note of the exhibition, the emotion of colour, began to unfurl. A mellow pink and cream light glowed over lime and grey storage cupboards. A blue-and-white willow-pattern plate of yellow lemons stood on a plainly painted and muted dresser. A highly colored jug of wine and a bowl of fruit are painted onto two cupboard doors, framed and hung high on the wall; Duncan painted these for the Charleston kitchen (1918). A wide cream stove, its vast chimney decorated with biting blue and white willow pattern plates, was the center of the installation. Chinese plates were transported from Hyde Park Gate, the Stephen family home, to Bloomsbury and later placed in Charleston (Shone, “Official Guide” 44). Four Omega chairs surround a wooden dining table set with white tin-glazed earthenware, the scene lit by a rose pink, ceramic, and bead style 1940s lampshade, as potted by Quentin Bell. Decorated by Grant, Quentin’s glazed ceramic mugs and pots were placed on low shelves. Two paintings complete the scene: Grant’s Still Life with Teapot (1929) and Vanessa’s gift to Duncan, Still Life, Polyanthus in Vase (c1930). The kitchen space was large, uncluttered, sparse, and yet warm. There was

4 See also Shone’s catalogue Duncan Grant Designer for the Liverpool 1980 exhibition.
5 See also Larsson’s Walking Virginia Woolf’s London: An Investigation in Literary Geography.
potency in the iridescent lighting, suggesting that here anything might happen. For Angelica Garnett, Charleston offered a place of “solace and protection: as a retreat combining an enjoyment of life with the act of creation” (Garnett, “The Earthly Paradise” 105); it was also where she too became absorbed by the benignity of color, learned from her parents, Vanessa and Duncan. She writes that in Charleston

I was surrounded by colors, shapes and textures which constituted my first language […] Indian red, black, prussian blue, lemon yellow and raw umber sang their own songs from wall to wall, qualifying the spaces of grey or white between. Each color or combinations of color became associated with a different texture or mood. (Garnett 107).

The opalescent quality of the color scheme of each installation combined with a distinctive lighting scheme to perform alchemical work, mixing there and here, then and now.

Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes performance of Le Dieu Bleu was the inspiration for artist Ernst Billgren. The 12 x 4 meter scenographic painting was set off against the sumptuous Léon-Bakst-designed costumes. It’s worth noting that Leonard observed that:

The Russian Ballet became for a time a curious centre for fashionable and intellectual London. It was the great days of Diaghilev with Nijinsky at the height of his powers in the classical ballets. I have never seen anything more perfect, nor more exciting, on any stage than Scheherazade, Carnaval, Lac des Cygnes[,] […] One’s pleasure was increased because night after night one could go to Covent Garden and find all round one one’s friends, the people whom one liked best in the world, moved and excited as one was oneself. (L. Woolf 48-49).

Ottoline Morrell was patron of the ballet for a time, and the peregrine dancer Lydia Lopokova became a popular favorite of the British public, many of whom who could now attend the ballet by virtue of lower-priced seating. Lydia and Maynard Keynes would confound his Bloomsbury acquaintances by their apparent incongruity while creating a successful, if unconventional, marriage. The inclusion of the extravagant costumes of the Ballets Russes and an Indian scenography provoked such creative dissonance, as did Grant’s oval-shaped portrait of Lydia in a red dress (c1940s).

For artist Peter Köhler, the Ham Spray space was an opportunity to explore Dora Carrington and Lytton Strachey’s creativity and attitude to painting. He admired “their positivism and a strong sense of freedom” (Andersson 31). Köhler’s mantra of “joy-in-the-making” infused the colorful hearth, painted with a frieze of animals, human figures, plants, furniture, and abstract forms against a pink background, above which shimmered a mirror like painting of sky and sand, merging into a leaf green, golden yellow, and ochre frame. A framed pencil sketch of Carrington (Gertler 1913) above the mantelpiece observed the visitors who sat and watched the film Carrington (Dir. Christopher Hampton 1995). A small mixed media with silver foil, Iris Tree on a Horse (Carrington c. 1920), cantered across the wall. Carrington’s affectionate painting (1916) of Lytton, wrapped in a red and green paisley shawl with his elongated fingers on the marbled spine of a book, is the signature piece of this space. Framed by light, the blue-green painting glowed against a lavender-tinted background. Lytton’s portrait established Carrington as a unique and distinctive artist. She had painted the person she loved and felt the most confidence in herself when it was finished (Hill 32). Ham Spray, a home created by Carrington and Lytton became “a complete way of life; a haven and refuge; a place of work and festivity; a place of rest but also a place of inspiration” (Hill 91). Like other visitors, I too wanted to stay in this serene, enticing room but there was more to see, more senses to saturate.

The lure of books drew me into an adjoining room and the next installation where classic, first, rare and early editions of Hogarth Press publications, nested in book-sized alcoves, arranged along the length of one wall were individually lit and displayed as if they were art-works, which indeed they were. Titles by Virginia Woolf included Two Stories (1917), Kew Gardens (1919), Jacob’s Room (1922), Mrs. Dalloway (1925), To the Lighthouse (1927), The Waves (1931), The Years (1937), Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown (1923), The Common Reader (1925) as well as T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land (1923). The warm tones and designs of the covers by Bell were highlighted in this display. In featuring the early publications only, some indication of the future life of the prodigious, professional, and world-renowned Hogarth Press would have been welcome—particularly for those books published in translation, given the non-Anglophone setting. I walked around a platen press printer, lit from above and positioned on a dais in the center of the room. A wooden walking stick floated in the dark space above, only noticeable when I looked up. An ink-smeared handprint on the floor reminded me of one of Virginia’s best-known letters to Vanessa, written on 26 April 1917, that focuses on the Woolfs new publishing venture.

Our press arrived on Tuesday. We unpacked it with enormous excitement[;] […] One has great blocks of type, which have to be divided into their separate letters, and founts, and then put into the right partitions[…] We get so absorbed we can’t stop; I see that real printing will devour one’s entire life. (L2 150)

In a letter to Violet Dickenson written in May 1917, Woolf writes of the pleasure of complete absorption in creating books: “We’ve just stopped printing after 3 hours—it is so fascinating that we can hardly bear to stop[…] We both so much enjoyed it, and you should be made to print after 3 hours—it is so fascinating that we can hardly bear to stop; […] We both so much enjoyed it, and you should be made to lend a hand” (Letters 2 155). The exhibition concluded with the salon at Garsington, filled with flowers, a piano, a sense of Ottoline’s glamour and grace, and the aura of those who basked in her convivial atmosphere. Biographies of Ottoline as well as her own memoirs recall the spirit of a time in which friendship was the pivot of life. This spirit was gently evoked throughout the exhibition.

A special issue of Artipelag (Sommaren 2018) features the exhibition Bloomsbury Spirit, with text by Mathias Dahlström. There are short biographies of Virginia Woolf, Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, Dora Carrington, Duncan Grant, John Maynard Keynes, Vanessa Bell, and Clive Bell, as well as the Omega Workshops and the Hogarth Press, interspersed with photographs of these familiar, their gardens and interior spaces, and their works. An explanatory exhibition

6 See Sandra Jobson Darroch’s Ottoline (1976) and Garsington Revisited. The Legend of Lady Ottoline Morrell Brought-Up-To-Date (2017) and Miranda Seymour’s Life on a Grand Scale (2008; the first edition was published in 1992; a revised edition was published in 1998).
guide, *Bloomsbury Spirit* is available in English, edited by Frida Andersson. It too features fourteen biographies including Vita Sackville-West, Ottoline Morrell, Lydia Lopokova, and Bertrand Russell. A 1931 photograph of an elegant Woolf in her Rodmell garden graces the cover of the exhibition guide, surrounded by a version of that now-familiar epigram composed of squares, circles, and triangles. Vara Neverow (*VWM 91*) and Stuart Clarke (*Virginia Woolf Bulletin*) identified the historical novelist, Margaret Irwin, as the source of the phrase that described the Bloomsbury Group as living in squares and loving in triangles. The *Artipelag* version of the shibboleth reads “They lived in circles. They painted in squares. They loved in triangles.” The adage is further reflected in a nicely executed but puzzling full-page illustration of reputed Bloomsbury relationships in *Artipelag* (Sommeran 2018). The finely drawn portraits are connected by lines of relationship, identified as “gifta” (married), “sex” (sexual relationship), “djup vänskap” (deep friendship) and “misslyckat frieri” (unsuccessful courtship). Converting the complexity of what were dynamic and changing relationships into a two-dimensional depiction is of course a fraught exercise. A line of sexual relationship between Virginia Woolf and Ottoline Morrell is drawn; their correspondence can be teasing, affectionate, and honest but was it ‘sexual’ in the narrow, conventional sense? The *Artipelag* illustration seems to me to be more expressive of Ottoline’s attraction for the sensual, the colour and texture of another person’s life. Ottoline’s allure and dazzle of her sensory powers are evocatively recalled in Woolf’s memoir sketch “Old Bloomsbury.” Here Woolf asked that her ‘excitement’ be excused, as she described the effect of Ottoline:

bearing down upon one from afar in her white shawl with great scarlet flowers on it and sweeping one away […] into a little room with her alone, where she plied one with questions that were so intimate and intense, about one’s life and one’s friends and made one sign one’s name in a little scented book—I think my excitement may be excused. (178)

Ingela Lind recalls the goals of Bloomsbury, “freedom, enlightenment, the utopia of the playful human and the civilised society” (Andersson 29). The exhibition takes its buoyancy and creative lift from Lind’s book, *Ta sig frihet—Bloomsburygruppern, Indien och konsten att leva* (*Take Liberty—The Bloomsbury Group, India and the Art of Living*). In her essay on the political significance of Bloomsbury, Lind identifies her motivation in curating this exhibition. For her, *Bloomsbury Spirit* represents a group of people who “broke free from majority thinking” and provide an ideological counterpoint to “the loathing of complexity” and provide an ideological counterpoint to “the loathing of complexity” and manipulation of representative democracy in our own time (Andersson 29). As I took my leave, I felt the collective effervescence of Bloomsbury that comes through when the ideas, paintings, and writings of each associated individual are given room to breathe and circulate. Apart from brief visits by Lytton Strachey and Leonard Woolf, I am not aware of how many of the Bloomsbury Group visited Sweden or were familiar with Swedish artists, musicians, writers, designers, or material culture. On a tour of relatives in Sweden and Denmark, shortly after his return from Ceylon, Leonard and his brother Edgar visited in July 1911. Swimming, talking, eating, hiking, and sleeping on tiny islands, the “sky and sea were bright blue; the sun beat down on [them] in this marvelous eternal summer” and he was “completely happy” (L. Woolf 44). For Leonard, the Swedish people were more civilized than other Europeans and were “advanced in everything,” including bathing in their skin (44). Leonard writes that “their civilization was their own. It was a little too
cultural. On a tour of relatives in Sweden and Denmark, shortly after his return from Ceylon, Leonard and his brother Edgar visited in July 1911. Swimming, talking, eating, hiking, and sleeping on tiny islands, the “sky and sea were bright blue; the sun beat down on [them] in this marvelous eternal summer” and he was “completely happy” (L. Woolf 44). For Leonard, the Swedish people were more civilized than other Europeans and were “advanced in everything,” including bathing in their skin (44). Leonard writes that “their civilization was their own. It was a little too
self-conscious, too antiseptic and sterilized for my own taste, but it was refreshingly alive and vigorous” (45).

*Bloomsbury Spirit* was a distinctive exhibition like no other I have visited, replete with sensory and visual experiences that prioritized accomplishment, creative work, a lightness of being, freedom, and aliveness while enduring grief and the hardships of war. In this centenary of World War I, Leonard’s observation of the world before 1914 is of a time when there was a “growing belief that it was a supremely good thing for people to be communally and individually happy” (44). *Bloomsbury Spirit* evoked friendship, happiness, and meaningful work energized by art, culture, and politics. When the pursuit of truth and knowledge remain a most urgent concern, the resilience of those Bloomsbury ideals continues to resonate. Not quite like a fairy tale, but I left knowing that somehow I was enchanted by my visit, a feeling that lingered for some time.

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**Reflections, Mirrors, and Frames in Between the Acts**

The mirror is one of Virginia Woolf’s favorite motifs, often serving in her fiction a depiction of the formation and disintegration of subjectivity; but there is a mirror with another function in *Between the Acts* which has seldom attracted critical attention. This paper proposes that Woolf’s social and cultural stances, specifically during the late 1930s, is reflected in this neglected reference to a mirror and, by extension, a

1 A Japanese version of this essay was published in 2017, in a collection of essays *Kotoba to iu Nazo [Words, an Enigma]*. An earlier English version of this essay was presented at the Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf in Canterbury on 21 June 2018.

2 Busse also notes the mirror (which will be discussed here) but does not distinguish it in function from the other mirrors in Woolf’s fiction.
number of other material motifs in the book. Because of its seeming fragmentariness and the disorderly state of its draft, the novel may be seen as reflecting the author’s own emotional confusion in the face of another devastating war. Yet a number of its closely knitted motifs will reveal the fact that the novel is a rational scheme carried out with perfect composure.

No doubt the most famous and well-discussed mirror in Between the Acts is the one which appears near the end of the pageant, when actors hold up mirrors to the audience. There is, however, another noteworthy mirror near the opening of the book:

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

Inside the glass, in her eyes, she saw what she had felt overnight for the ravaged, the silent, the romantic gentleman farmer. ‘In love,’ was in her eyes. But outside, on the washstand, on the dressing-table, among the silver boxes and tooth-brushes, was the other love; love for her husband, the stockbroker—“The father of my children,” she added, slipping into the cliché conveniently provided by fiction. Inner love was in the eyes; outer love on the dressing-table. But what feeling was it that stirred in her now when above the looking-glass, out of doors, she saw coming across the lawn the perambulator; two nurses; and her little boy George, lagging behind?

She tapped on the window with her embossed hairbrush. They were too far off to hear. [...] She returned to her eyes in the looking-glass. “In love,” she must be [...]. (Between the Acts [BTA] 12-13)

This scene seems to present a typical Woolfian motif, “the woman facing her mirror”; yet it has one unique characteristic: there is little description of the woman’s appearance reflected in the mirror. Whereas elsewhere in her work, mirrors depict in detail what they reflect, specifically a woman’s features, this passage scarcely describes Isa’s face. What, then, does this mirror-scene reveal instead? The above passage reveals what Isa sees at every given moment; and it shows that her gaze wavers between the mirror and the world beyond it. Accordingly, the boundary between the inner and outer realms of the mirror—that is, the frame of Isa’s looking-glass—seems to present itself. Never mentioned, the frame of her mirror is invisible, yet slyly implied. The reiteration of “outside,” “inside,” and related words throughout this passage also draws attention to the existence of the frame.

This frame of the mirror possesses one notable feature: though it forms the border between the inside and outside of the mirror, the frame serves to underline not the distinction between the two realms but their association. This is demonstrated by an exploration of Isa’s consciousness throughout the scene. Here, Isa thinks of her “illicit” love for Haines and her marital love for Giles; and she calls for the former “[i]ncern love” and names the latter “outer love,” thus trying to distinguish the two (BTA 13). It is noteworthy, however, that Isa locates the former in her eyes reflected “inside the glass” but sees the latter resting “on the dressing table” (BTA 13). Since the looking glass and the dressing table form a dresser together, this suggests her two loves are, in fact, inseparably connected. When seeing, then, her children and their nurses outside the window of her room, Isa feels her maternal affection aroused and tries to draw their attention by tapping on the window with her [...] hairbrush” (BTA 13). Yet soon after that, the same affection urges her to return to her looking-glass and further explore her love for Haines. Thus, while her consciousness is oscillating between one form of love and another which are intimately related, Isa’s gaze moves quickly between the mirror and the world beyond it. Accordingly, the mirror-frame that her eyes continue to cross over without any difficulty comes to look like a somewhat ambiguous boundary between its inside and outside.

This somewhat arbitrary frame reminds us of a new style of picture frames invented in late nineteenth-century England. In her discussion of the relationship between interior design and modernism, Victoria Rosner explains the nature of the newly invented frame and its aesthetic effects. Up until the early Victorian era, according to Rosner, the picture frame was “a stock item” (38) taking a fixed form. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, some artists began to reconsider its design and function and started to customize the frame to each individual picture. The most radical of these artists were the painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler and the designer Edward William Godwin: conceiving the idea that “the frame is part of the surrounding environment and that, by extension, the picture is too” (Rosner 34), they tried to obliterate the boundary between “the aesthetic terrain of the picture and the sphere of everyday life” (Rosner 45) by making the frame out of the same material as that of the surrounding. This modern frame makes a clear contrast with traditional frames, which acted “as bridges or barriers between art and life” (Rosner 34); the newly invented frame is intended to fuse the artistic matter and its surrounding environment, thereby harmonizing the whole interior. Rosner observes that with this attempt, the picture frame “becomes a porous boundary” (34).

The frame of Isa’s mirror, which serves to connect its inside and outside, can also be regarded as a kind of porous boundary. As with the modern picture-frame, which undermines the traditional notion that art ranks above everyday life, the frame of Isa’s mirror questions the predominance of one form of love over another, equalizing them. The motif of the porous boundary can be seen here as serving to level the neighboring realms on both sides of the boundary and thus represents a democratic gesture towards life. Another example can be found in the section just after the above looking-glass scene. While in the study, Isa reads an article reporting a rape case in Whitehall and starts to imagine the scene. In her mind’s eye, the upper part of “the mahogany door panels” of the study (BTA 18-19)—that is, the upper part of the doorframe—looks like “the Arch in Whitehall” (BTA 19). And she seems to see “through the Arch the barricade room; in the barricade room the bed, and on the bed the girl was screaming and hitting him about the face” (BTA 19). But in the middle of her reimagining, the very door Isa is vacantly looking at opens, and “in came Mrs. Swithin carrying a hammer” (BTA 19). It is as if Isa’s unconscious desire for someone to help the screaming girl in her imagination was attained by a coincidence in actual life—the entrance of Mrs. Swithin. Thus, through the doorframe, the imaginary world and actual life overlap, interpenetrating each other.

The main room of Pointz Hall where the Olivers and their guests gather—“the big room with the windows open to the garden” (BTA 3)—also assumes permeability. In the opening of Between the Acts, the main room reveals Bart talking to his guests, the Haines. They are first discussing the cresspool in their village, then they move on to an incident in Mrs. Haine’s childhood, and finally to the ancient history of the site now chosen for the cresspool. Meanwhile, outside the home, animals make sounds—“a cow coughed” and “[a] bird chuckled” (BTA 3)—intermingling with the talk inside. In fact, the sounds outside seem to direct the talk inside, as if through the open windows the outside world permeates into the interior, affecting the minds of the people.

Rosner observes that “[t]he [traditional] frame declares the work of art to be a thing of value; it announces that its contents need and are worthy of protection, and it distinguishes the world of the artwork from the world of the viewer” (35).

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3 For details, see, for example, Hussey, Introduction xii, lii.
4 Zweidling and Beer, for instance, observe that a main theme of the book involves the pageant, culminating in its final mirror scene.
5 Clarissa in Mrs Dalloway scrutinises her reflection in the mirror, noting a clear difference between “herself” (her real identity) and “her self” (her public identity) (31, 32); Eleanor in The Years finds traces of years in “several little white strokes” around her eyes reflected in the mirror (189).
inside. This intermingling of the two realms—the inside and outside of the room—is epitomized by a comical description of Mrs. Haines’ face, which is compared to the realistic face of a goose that connects to the rural landscape outside.

The boundary between the exterior of Pointz Hall and the interior becomes most ambiguous at the end of the book. There, the Olivers assemble again in the main room as night falls. Its windows are left open; and as dusk thickens, the outside scenery becomes invisible. It is then reported that “[t]he window was all sky without color. The house had lost its shelter” (BTA 197). Here, the window frames, and by extension the walls, of Pointz Hall seem to dissolve. Furthermore, as the boundary between the outside and inside of the house is blurred, the present time and space mingles with the time and space of some distant past. The narrator states, “It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks” (BTA 197). Thus, at the end of Between the Acts not only the distinction between the outside and inside of its setting but also the temporal and spatial division between the past and the present becomes difficult to discern.

Permeable frames are also found in the structure of the book itself. Between the Acts is composed of a number of sections marked by blank spaces. Since blank spaces are, as Barbara Babcock puts it, “as much means of imaginative continuity as they are instances of discontinuity” (97), the sections look at once separated and united. This blurred nature of the sectional divisions is complemented by the inner and outer binary motifs reiterated throughout the book. The same motifs appearing over several sections hint at one another, thereby (loosely) interrelating the sections. It is as if the blank spaces between sections serve as porous boundaries enabling this to happen.

The dining room of Pointz Hall has two pictures hung on the wall: a picture of a lady and the portrait of “an ancestor” of the Olivers (BTA 33). Even their frames, which are supposedly firm and solid, look arbitrary. Rumor has it that the ancestor, while having his portrait painted, asked the painter to include Colin—“his famous hound” (BTA 33); but that, since there was no room, Colin was excluded from the portrait. This mentioning of the dog left out of the portrait draws attention to the frame of the picture. Yet at the same time, by imagining the dog waiting on his master just outside the limits of the painting, we see the portrait as extending beyond its frame. Consequently, the picture-frame starts to look like something at once solid and elastic.

It is also noteworthy that the two pictures are described as something so appealing that viewers cannot help dwelling upon them after seeing them. Indeed, the above scene explaining the story of the ancestor’s dog is told by Bart and his sister to their guests. They also say many other things about the portrait, a fact which is suggested by the narrator: “He is told by Bart and his sister to their guests. They also say many other things about the portrait” (BTA 33). Even their frames, which are supposedly firm and solid, look arbitrary. Rumor has it that the ancestor, while having his portrait painted, asked the painter to include Colin—“his famous hound” (BTA 33); but that, since there was no room, Colin was excluded from the portrait. This mentioning of the dog left out of the portrait draws attention to the frame of the picture. Yet at the same time, by imagining the dog waiting on his master just outside the limits of the painting, we see the portrait as extending beyond its frame. Consequently, the picture-frame starts to look like something at once solid and elastic.

In the pageant in Between the Acts, art intermingles with daily life as mirrors are held up to the audience; and this places the audience (the ‘see-er’) in the position of the actors (the seen), thereby making “[t]he boundary between the words of the pageant and the words and thought of the audience” permeable (Busse 135). This, furthermore, makes the reader gain the viewpoint of the audience, merging the thoughts of the reader and the audience. Thus, the mirrors serve to dissolve (if only temporarily) the framework of the pageant, as well as the narrative framework of the text itself. Temporal and spatial amalgamation also takes place here: the historical past, the present time of the novel, and the here and now of every reading experience are mingled.

Let us here note that Woolf, from an early stage in her literary career, endeavored to create works that crossed existing literary genres. Indeed, genre-crossing is the essence of Woolf’s modernist aesthetics. This democratic attitude about literary practice seems to be associated with her cosmopolitan view of life itself. Woolf wrote in Three Guineas that “as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (313). This quote suggests her aspiration to psychologically break down, or rather extend, any existing boundaries between one nation and another to unite different peoples. Her desire for psychological unification beyond borders must have been intensified against the ever-increasing international tensions in the late 1930s, when the whole world was being dragged into power struggles between countries. It was in such a severe political climate that Between the Acts was conceived and written.

Indeed, as if accelerated by the worldwide calamities, Woolf’s democratic—genre-crossing—practice in fiction reaches its culmination in Between the Acts. Mark Hussey, among others, observes that the novel assumes the very form Woolf has sought for throughout her literary career—an amalgamation of prose, poetry and play. There seems then no reason why we cannot believe that individual components of the book as well as its form are imbued with the author’s democratic thought—her profound desire to present some ideal, peaceful connections. In fact, this is verified by Woolf’s own words in her diary entry for 26 April 1938, when she conceived Between the Acts. She writes: the projected book will adopt “‘we’” instead of “‘I’”; and it will be “composed of many different things”: “all life, all art, all waifs & strays—a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole” (Diary 5 135). Woolf thus sought to create a harmonious whole in her book in terms of both human and non-human relationships. It is therefore possible that a number of motifs of permeable frames or boundaries scattered throughout Between the Acts are intended to undermine the hegemony, predominance, or control of any one component of life over another, pointing to the ultimate scheme of peace in life (however imaginary).

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7 See, for instance, her essay “Poetry, Fiction and the Future.”

8 As to the social and cultural background to the writing of Between the Acts, see, for example, Froula 287-89; Dick and Millar xi-xix.

9 For details, see Hussey, “‘I’ Rejected” 144.
The Philosophical Lepidoptera: The Butterfly Effect in Mrs. Dalloway

The significance of a thing that is secret or hidden may not be recognized until we find a metaphor for it. This is the case in Mrs. Dalloway when Clarissa Dalloway pauses in her Bond Street shopping, “choosing a pair of gloves” and “when the sentence was finished something had happened.” This extraordinary happening is never completely visualized and remains vague, but the sentence that follows bears a clue: “Something so trifling in single instances that no mathematical instrument, though capable of transmitting shocks in China, could register the vibration; yet in its fullness rather formidable and in its common appeal emotional” (Mrs. Dalloway [MD] 25). Stated simply, it means that small causes could lead to large effects, cautioning against a de minimus approach that assesses the event as too trivial to merit consideration. With even slightly different conditions, very different results may occur.

How this applies to the condition of the world or the novel, or anything else for that matter, remains obscure for now. Yet, this rather rambling passage suggests the concept attributed to the French mathematician Henri Poincaré from Science et méthode (1914), the theory famously paraphrased as a particular awareness for “the sensitive dependence on initial conditions”—i.e., “a very small cause which escapes our notice determines a considerable effect that we cannot fail to see” (Poincaré 67). This simple concept implies that trifles at the outset may yield formidable consequences in the conclusion. Since minute changes in initial conditions can produce large changes overall, it promises a richly organized pattern.

In 1972, meteorologist Edward Lorenz rechristened Poincaré’s concept as the “Butterfly Effect,” a metaphor required for full comprehension that is currently recuperated as the image inadvertently sketched on his computer screen. A minute cause might lead to incalculable effects. Several comparable examples have been invented: Would the flap of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas? The textual remark about “shocks in China” in Mrs. Dalloway fits nicely with the concept, but this curious passage in Mrs. Dalloway has stirred little interest. However, when associated with Poincaré’s notion, the reference to the shocks in China are a clear example of the metaphorical butterfly effect.

Several other global events mentioned in Mrs. Dalloway are highly relevant to Poincaré’s concept. Specifically, something had happened when Mr. Brewer had great plans for his employee, Septimus Smith, and the case of Septimus Smith illustrates one instance in which the narrative fits the requirements for a sensitive dependence on initial conditions. “Something was up, Mr. Brewer knew”; the word “something” remains an echo when Brewer, who thought “very highly of Smith’s abilities,” advised football (MD 129). The “something” that seemed a trifling thing was the mere pistol shot in Sarajevo that resulted in a global conflict “which threw out many of Mr. Brewer’s calculations, took away his ablest fellows, so plying and insidious were the fingers of the European War, smashed a plaster cast of Ceres, ploughed a hole in the geranium beds, and utterly ruined the cook’s nerves” (MD 129). Within the paradigm of the butterfly effect it also shattered the nerves of Septimus Smith who “was one of the first to volunteer” for the war (MD 130). “He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays,” and there “he developed manliness” which Mr. Brewer had desired (MD 130).

The importance of the butterfly effect for Septimus Smith in Mrs. Dalloway clearly introduces a process of selecting events from among a few possible alternatives those candidates whose incandescence fits most closely to the paradigm, a small beginning that yields a great consequence. According to Proust, reprising the concept, “the smallest facts, the most trivial happenings, are only the outward signs of an idea which has to be elucidated and which often conceals other ideas, like a palimpsest” (108-11). The process of selecting examples is limited to other events in the narrative containing elements theoretically possible in structural terms. That is, the butterfly effect does not hold rigidly solely to the narrative of Septimus Smith.

Clarissa Dalloway’s life, her marriage in particular, draws upon the butterfly metaphor that requires an awareness of a sensitive dependence on initial conditions. For example, the misnomer of “Wickham” given to Richard before Clarissa’s marriage becomes a cause for amusement in Sally Seton’s eyes. But she does not say what she thinks, and even with modest initial conditions, very different consequences may occur. Sally revisits the name Wickham years later at Clarissa’s party as she sits with Peter Walsh, awaiting the hostess’ appearance. The past is prologue (MD 285; see also MD 92). “And the marriage had been, Sally supposed, a success?” Sally launches a series of suppositions that question the Dalloway’s nuptial validity, typical among her speculations being whether or not their marriage had prospered. Again, regarding Richard Dalloway she queries, “He hadn’t been a success, Sally supposed?” assumed for the sake of argument since Richard was “not in the Cabinet” (MD 284). She supposes that he might also be involved in public work. As for the Dalloways as a couple, she asks, “And were they happy together?” (MD 293). She knows nothing about them, but she leaps to a series of conclusions.

Sally’s suppositions about the marriage, paradoxically conveyed by omissions, carries various indications of disbelief. The introduction of Richard Dalloway as “Wickham” seemed a small matter at the time, like the flap of a butterfly’s wing in the context of “initial conditions.” Yet Sally now remembers the issue, “that dreadful, ridiculous scene over Richard Dalloway,” when Clarissa introduced Richard to others as Wickham. Sally teases Clarissa for her name choice, presumably because the mistake invokes the cad in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice who carried off the youngest Bennet daughter, Lydia (MD 92, 96). But as Sally recalls, Clarissa snaps back, “Why not call Richard ‘Wickham?”
produce very large effects on the whole system. This has become a
"flung himself down" onto the area railings. Once again, small events
previously minor illness burgeons suddenly into his suicide when he
interests," Septimus ironically obliges this advice by literally throwing
Having been counseled by Dr. Holmes "to throw [himself] into outside
A small uncertainty may lead to large errors in terms of his target.
(MD 226). Rather, Dr. Holmes’s intentions more likely focus on Rezia.
the door. Holmes would say ‘In a funk, eh?’ Holmes would get him”
he speaks of, is problematic. His fright drives Septimus to desperate
Rezia aside (MD 225). The explanation of his quarry, this friendship
residence saying, “My dear lady, I have come as a friend,” again pushing
Rezia thinks. Equally clearly the initial conditions are of no concern
to Dr. Holmes. It seems, however, that he has other interests involving
Rezia, “quite a girl, a foreigner, wasn’t she?,” that “charming little
lady” with the “pretty comb” (MD 138-39). He even asks her to tea, an
unlikely practice for a conscientious physician. Assertively, Dr. Holmes
has to give Lucretia “a friendly push” on the stairs before getting into the
patient’s bedroom when he comes to see Septimus. Rezia is Septimus’s
protective sentinel and blocks Dr. Holmes way initially.

However, when Dr. Holmes makes his final visit, he is not so kind as
he was before (MD 142). Even after the end of six weeks of medical
attention administered by Dr. Holmes, the Smiths have resorted to Sir
William Bradshaw who subscribes to the fashionable principles of
human eugenics that began in the twenties in the United Kingdom;
Bradshaw believes Septimus suffers from a lack of good blood and
unsocial impulses, probably making him unfit for fathering children and
requiring imprisonment, all for improbable afflictions. Thus, Rezia’s
opinion toward the medical faculty is changed: “Sir William Bradshaw
was not a nice man.” For Bradshaw, “it was a question of law.” The
therapy is simple: “He shut people up” (MD 150-54).

Preparing for Dr. Bradshaw’s care plan, Septimus experiences three
lucid perceptions of erotically symbolic bananas on the sideboard while
he hallucinates about Evans and worries about Dr. Holmes, “the brute
with the red nostrils” (MD 211, 215, 220, 223). It is a mere six hours
later when Dr. Holmes unexpectedly arrives once more at the Smith’s
residence saying, “My dear lady, I have come as a friend,” again pushing
Rezia aside (MD 225). The explanation of his quarry, this friendship
he speaks of, is problematic. His fright drives Septimus to desperate
measures. “Holmes was coming upstairs. Holmes would burst open
the door. Holmes would say ‘In a funk, eh?’ Holmes would get him”
(MD 226). Rather, Dr. Holmes’s intentions more likely focus on Rezia.
A small uncertainty may lead to large errors in terms of his target.
Having been counseled by Dr. Holmes “to throw [himself] into outside
interests,” Septimus ironically obliges this advice by literally throwing
himself from the window. With Holmes at the door, the patient’s
previously minor illness burgeons suddenly into his suicide when he
“flung himself down” onto the area railings. Once again, small events
produce very large effects on the whole system. This has become a
consequence in other situations as seen before.

In each case, a small cause led to large-scale effects. The obscure
discourse in Mrs. Dalloway introduces the butterfly effect. In each of
these readings, a simple error in the beginning produces enormous
unforeseen consequences. Prediction regarding the nature of the outcome
is difficult without an accurate appreciation of initial conditions. In
three different scenes of the novel, Poincaré’s concept of causality
and Lorenz’s butterfly effect metaphor are recognized and have been
regularly considered; however, the phenomenon may also be present in
many other circumstances. Although each issue may have seemed a trifle
at the commencement, the consequences have been typically formidable.

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Independent Scholar

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Call for “Truly Miscellaneous” Submissions
The Virginia Woolf Miscellany welcomes a range
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**Book Reviews**

**FROM THE BOOK REVIEW EDITOR**

All publishers, authors and scholars should direct inquiries regarding books to Karen Levenback, the Book Review Editor, as should anyone interested in reviewing books for the Miscellany. Please direct any queries to Karen Levenback at kklevenback@att.net

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**REVIEW**

**VIRGINIA WOOLF AND HERITAGE: SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VIRGINIA WOOLF**


*Eternally in yr debt*: The Personal and Professional Relationship between Virginia Woolf & Elizabeth Robins


It was a pleasure to review *Virginia Woolf and Heritage: Selected Papers from the Twenty-sixth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf* and ‘Eternally in yr debt’: The Personal and Professional Relationship Between Virginia Woolf & Elizabeth Robins as I was unable to attend the 2016 Woolf conference held at Leeds Trinity University, UK. The benefits of attending Woolf conferences are multitude, as the reader no doubt well knows—the annual conferences yield new ways to read Woolf and help one discover under-read modernist writers. I was happy to discover, then, that these two volumes engender these conference perks, as they open fresh critical avenues of Woolfian scholarship while introducing new writerly voices.

The diverse *Virginia Woolf and Heritage*, curated by Jane de Gay, Tom Breckin, and Anne Reus, includes 36 papers from conference presentations and plenary speeches by David Bradshaw and Laura Marcus. The wide-ranging choice of essays in the volume are a testament to the editors’ charitable imaginations, as papers were chosen to “explore some of the complex dynamics of Virginia Woolf’s relationship with heritage” and vary widely—and delightfully—in tone, subject, and writing style (viii).

The volume commences with a lively essay by Jane Goldman, in which she attests that heritage is a “toxic” term because it long implied the sexist system of primogeniture (6). It is not until post-1970 that the term begins to collect its many valences: the cultural and historical weight and wealth of the years, as well as the multifaceted brilliance of former lives, letters, lectures, and buildings. Goldman rightly concludes that “men are the beneficiaries and subjects of heritage,” while women are “its mere reified means of perpetuation and object commodities” (6). In fact, Goldman attests that Woolf herself obviously disliked the term, as it appears nowhere in her writing aside from one single use in “On a Faithful Friend” (3).

The remainder of the book is divided into sections on heritage: its transmission (“Heritage, Education, and Mentoring”); its physical spaces, such as libraries and houses (“Heritage Spaces”); Woolf’s engagement with distinct cultural heritages such as Greek tradition, mysticism, and other canonical writers (“Literary and Cultural Heritages”); queering the monolithic and often patriarchal idea of heritage (“Queer Pasts”); modernist interventions (“Modernism and Heritage”); heritage translated into “fact” or biography versus fiction or the novel (“Writing Lives and Histories”); and, finally, the heritage that Woolf herself has created (“Woolf’s Legacies”). The final plenary essay by Laura Marcus, comprising a chapter of its own, lucidly interrogates heritage, shame and biography through “A Sketch of the Past.”

Noteworthy papers, to touch on only a few, explore topics as diverse as a consideration of great houses in Woolf (Miller), Lidia Yuknavičius’s experimental novel *The Small Backs of Children* (2016) and its relationship with Woolf (Hollis), and strippers in Vegas and their ambivalent relationship with feminism but unashamed embrace of Woolf (Baucom). Other standout pieces consider Woolf and: her desk (Hankins); Grecian legacy (McVicker); the Romantic poets (Pinho); Queen Elizabeth (Clarke); Austen (Simpson); book burning or libricide (Gillespie); Rhys and autobiogaphy (Czarnecki); and Woolf’s French biographers (Rigade).

The volume is especially enjoyable because each article is detailed yet concise. Throughout, the articles have a congenial, off-hand tone, as if you’ve just settled in for a luncheon with friends who also happen to be smart, witty, capable, and full of fascinating information about Woolf and others. These lovingly-curated pieces beguile you with fierce and funny scholarly writing that is too friendly and engaging to be called merely “criticism.” This is a pleasuring volume to add to any common reader’s collection on Woolf, personal or public. It would be an excellent pedagogical tool in the graduate or undergraduate classroom, illustrating the sheer number and scope of potential critical avenues to take when considering a single word: heritage. If you were, like me, unfortunate enough to have missed this conference, this volume is like a treasured time capsule.

Hilary Newman’s ‘Eternally in yr debt’ is a pamphlet-length monograph published in the Bloomsbury Heritage Series that explores the unlikely pairing of Woolf and Elizabeth Robins, who was born in Kentucky in 1862. The booklet is geared towards readers familiar with Robins, as it does not provide a general introduction to her and her relationship with Woolf. Indeed, I found it a bit disorienting to begin the essay *in medias res* with the relationship between Woolf’s parents and Robins already in full swing, having no idea of how this relationship came to be. The organization of the monograph is a challenge, as it is not until the third paragraph that Robins herself is more fully fleshed out: she wrote *The Open Question* (1898) and many other novels, short stories, and articles. Just how Robins first met the Stephen family appears to be a mystery, although Newman suggests “it seems that the Stephen parents and the Duckworth members of the household enjoyed a friendship with Elizabeth Robins in the 1890s when Virginia was still a child” (12). We eventually also learn Robins was an actress, twenty years older than Woolf, and a revolutionary force on the London stage in the 1890s.

The book references many unpublished letters between Woolf and Robins, which are mildly interesting. Much is made of Robins’ passion for Woolf and not the other way around, for Woolf, it seems, chiefly “appeared to value Robins as a connection with her Victorian past and particularly her memories of the Stephen parents” (12). In the strongest portion of the book, Newman traces the similarities of the two women: hereditary mental illness—Newman employs the words “madness” (10); ailing physical health and resulting “rest cures” (11); and mentions childlessness. The monograph then details the feminist slant of both

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2 As a helpful aside to the reader, I found that most of Robins’ texts are published online at *The Elizabeth Robins Web* by Jacksonville State University (http://www.jsu.edu/robinsweb/)
writers, considering texts such as Robins’ *The Convert* (1907), *Way Stations* (1913), and *Ancilla’s Share: An Indictment of Sex Antagonism* (1924), alongside Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), and *Three Guineas* (1938), among others. Both wrote of the importance of women in peace efforts and the significance of the woman writer. Both were interested, Newman contends, in the “lives of obscure women” (22).

One hates to be an ungenerous reader, but I was not particularly engaged by the prose or by the topic. I was, however, inspired to learn more about Robins' Appalachian roots, her gutsy Alaskan expedition to find her brother in 1900 (tantalizingly mentioned in a footnote), and her volume of short stories about working-class characters (*Below the Salt*, 1896). The book does deliver what it sets out to do: it sheds light on an under-read figure of modernism. It would be right at home in *Virginia Woolf and Her Female Contemporaries: Selected Papers from the 25th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*. This book would also interest those working in Robins studies, drama, or theatre studies, in addition to those interested in Woolf and war (14-15), feminism and suffragettes (12-14), and women and economic independence (16). It is slight, 28 pages, and one could easily finish reading it in an hour.

If you wish to expand your knowledge of underrepresented modernist writers while invigorating your thoughts on Woolf, I suggest you give *Virginia Woolf and Heritage* and ‘Eternally in yr debt’ a read. Perhaps they will inspire you to present at the next Woolf conference!

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**REVIEW**

**NATURAL CONNECTIONS:**

**VIRGINIA WOOLF & KATHERINE MANSFIELD**

**KATHERINE MANSFIELD AND THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP**

Katherine Mansfield’s star seems to be on the rise in modernist studies. Of 812 articles on Mansfield indexed in the *MLA International Bibliography* dating back to 1927, 113 were published since 2016; these include pieces on teaching Mansfield, Mansfield’s modernist legacies, her subversion of class and gender binaries, her experiments with narration—and more. Yet despite the recent increase in scholarly attention, Mansfield still remains under-studied, and her position in modernist studies remains unsettled. Two new contributions to Mansfield studies frame their work as “Mansfield and...” working comparatively to shed new light on Mansfield in relation to other writers and literary movements. How can examinations of these personal and literary relationships help to position Mansfield more clearly in the modernist constellation? How might Mansfield’s presence change the critical conversation around canonical figures and texts? While *Natural Connections: Virginia Woolf & Katherine Mansfield and the Bloomsbury Group* conceptualize their comparison of “Mansfield and” differently, each suggests the value of including Mansfield’s outsider, colonial perspective as a way of reexamining parts of the modernist canon.

Bonnie Kime Scott explores representations of the natural world in Woolf and Mansfield in *Natural Connections*, part of Cecil Woolf Publishers’ *Bloomsbury Heritage* series. Scott’s ecofeminist analysis proceeds through nine brief chapters comparing Woolf’s and Mansfield’s life and writing on such topics as “Modernist and Feminist Investments in Nature,” “Collaborations with Animals,” and “Floral Cultivation.” As Scott notes, “[c]omparisons of Woolf and Mansfield are not new” (44 n4), and earlier critics have also investigated the two writers’ depictions of nature. Still, Scott does much to demonstrate the degree to which the natural world permeated both writers’ imaginations, fed their creativity, and shaped their modernist innovations and perspectives on the natural and social worlds. While not claiming comprehensiveness—an impossibility in such a short work—Scott nonetheless reveals significant points of intersection in the ways that Woolf and Mansfield saw and wrote about nature, not only in their fiction but also in their assessments (both positive and negative) of each other’s work. While she identifies many parallels across Woolf’s and Mansfield’s work, Scott finds an important distinction in the way each writer balances nature and the human, “with Mansfield more firmly situating herself in a human perspective and Woolf offering characters that merge more with the natural world” (5). True to her ecofeminist perspective, Scott’s largely descriptive work emphasizes “contextual and relational thinking” over “hierarchical structuring of thought” (20).

In “Towards a Politics of Flowers,” Scott shows that Mansfield’s colonial background created a context for her depictions of gardens that Woolf did not share. Red geraniums that “had so often decorated processes of thought” (46) for Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) lead to unwelcome thoughts of non-belonging for Mansfield: “why should they ask me every time I go near: ‘And what are you doing in a London garden’?[…] I am a little Colonial walking in the London garden patch—allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger” (*The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks* 166). Gardens, whether material or literary, provided a repeated “natural connection” for Woolf and Mansfield. Mansfield visited the Woolfs at Asheham twice; she praised Woolf’s short story collection *Kew Gardens* (1919) and the title story in particular. The two writers also shared a connection to the gardens at Garsington, Ottoline Morrell’s country house and a “node” for Bloomsbury social and intellectual networks. Both Woolf and Mansfield visited Garsington and corresponded with Morrell; Scott notes that in letters “both writers [take] up the description of Morrell’s gardens, both for their beauty, but particularly as a site for discussions between remarkable pairs of people” (13).

Exploring Mansfield’s relationships to those networks of “remarkable people” who made up the Bloomsbury Group is the aim of *Katherine Mansfield and the Bloomsbury Group*, edited by Todd Martin. Mansfield’s feelings about Bloomsbury were ambiguous at best. The essays in the collection amplify Scott’s point that Mansfield’s moments of personal and intellectual intimacy with people like Woolf alternated
with frustration at what she felt was the group’s elitism and a persistent sense that she was being reminded of her colonial background and told she did not belong. It was not just geraniums but many of the members of the group Mansfield referred to as the “Blooms Berries” (Letters 1326) who could make Mansfield feel her outsider status. Foregrounding Mansfield’s sense of alienation though is crucial to the book’s project, which seeks as much to use Mansfield to help redefine Bloomsbury as to provide insights to Mansfield’s work itself. Introducing the collection of essays, Martin states his intention to “hove around the periphery” of Bloomsbury, “exploring […] from the outside-in, with the hope that by sketching the borders we might reveal—through relief—a new perspective” (4).

The book’s twelve essays are divided into two sections: the first focuses on Mansfield’s personal relationships with Bloomsbury figures, both central and marginal; the second, on Mansfield’s views of Bloomsbury, exploring Mansfield’s aesthetic differences from and satiric portrayals of the group in her short fiction. Mary Ann Gilles’s “Katherine Mansfield: A Fauvist, Colonial Outsider Encounters Bloomsbury” stood out in the volume for its clear articulation and solid theorization of the role played by Mansfield’s colonial origins in her representations of perception. Gerri Kimber also argues compellingly for a reexamination of the relationship between Mansfield and Aldous Huxley in light of their repeated fictional representations of each other. Ruchi Mundequa’s essay on Mansfield’s critical representations of the imperial consumerism that underlay Bloomsbury’s bohemian revisions of domestic space makes a strong contribution to the developing body of work on modernist domesticity.

Even as the collection seeks, and in several essays provides, a “new perspective” (1) on Bloomsbury, some central figures are overlooked. Mansfield and Woolf are paired in a full third of the collection’s essays (and most of the rest make some mention of Woolf as well); Christine Darron, Sydney Janet Kaplan, Chris Mourant, and Richard Cappuccio present a variety of approaches to the Mansfield/Woolf dyad. This suggests, as Scott’s book also demonstrates, that even though comparisons between Mansfield and Woolf are not new there still remain new things to say about them in relation to each other. Nonetheless, as the collection works to reconsider Bloomsbury through Mansfield’s relationships to other male figures (such as Walter de la Mare and W. L. George) it is striking that no other female writers or artists—central to Bloomsbury or, like Mansfield, on its margins—are placed in such relation to Mansfield. Perhaps those links don’t exist, but it seems possible that the Mansfield/Woolf “public of two,” to borrow Woolf’s phrase about the two (Diary 1222), has the potential to eclipse other comparisons that might reveal valuable perspectives as well.

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REVIEW
**Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury, Volume 2: International Influence and Politics**

I reviewed the first volume of *Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury* (2010) in 2015. At the end of my review I wrote that I eagerly awaited the second volume. *Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury, Volume 2: International Influence and Politics* is well worth the wait—indeed, as rich as the first collection was, this one, though shorter, is equally so, but also more unified and polished.

In his astute contribution to Volume 2, “Virginia Woolf as Policy Analyst,” Craufurd D. Goodwin presents a new way of conceiving the Bloomsbury Group: as a “think tank” or a somewhat regularized gathering of people who meet to discuss and provide advice on the pressing issues of the day (66). This is of course the kind of activity in which the Bloomsbury Group excelled. Goodwin describes their three-step process: they examined a subject from as many angles as possible; proposed moderate policy changes; and, if these proposals were not successful, they returned to the subject with new tools (70). In the course of this “distinctive methodology of [...] policy inquiry” (70), they “reached out widely to many disciplines and bodies of knowledge to gain insights” (69). With its eleven essays pursuing multiple modes of inquiry and expanding into global considerations, *Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury, Volume 2* is a textual embodiment of the Bloomsbury group think tank.

In this excellent collection, well-edited and well-organized by Lisa Shahriari and Gina Potts, the contributors themselves engage with the very kinds of questions that concerned the Bloomsbury Group—namely, on international influence and politics, as indicated by the second half of the collection’s title.

The essays in the collection originated from the Fourteenth Annual Virginia Woolf conference, “Back to Bloomsbury,” where they were first presented as papers in 2004. They were submitted for publication in 2006, published in 2010, and are now being reviewed nearly ten years later, in 2019. That said, the conversations that started fifteen years ago remain as relevant as ever. For example, in her discussion of Woolf and the news-making machinery of her day, Judith Allen asks, “why, in 2006, do we still find those in power constantly repeating that dissent is ‘unpatriotic,’ while those leaders of the opposition seem to cower in silence[?]” (18-19). The opposition, as it is represented in *Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury, Volume 2*, are not silent; they are talking with each other, and they are talking with us. The think tank is spilling out of its confines, and across time as well. Some of the contributors are even in dialogue with their past selves. For example, Kathryn Simpson, Jane Goldman, and Melba Cuddy-Keane are continuing work on topics with which they have been engaged—respectively commodity culture, the semiotics of dogs, and globalization and literature. With the passing of time, they and others are continuing and building on their work, and *Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury, Volume 2* is a stage along the way. The collection presents a nexus of thinking and work across time and topics. With politics as the strand that runs through the book, we have here a rich exploration of essays on aesthetics, war, economics, the Hogarth Press, and globalization.

Michael Payne’s “Woolf’s Political Aesthetic” and Jane Goldman’s “Who Let the Dogs Out?” both address politics and aesthetics. In his marvelous essay, Payne describes how Woolf’s political aesthetic involves moving from a “generalised sense of empathy to [a] more particular identification” (34). Payne explains how Woolf’s particularized, empathic imagination becomes a political force in the way that it stays “focused on the situated moment of her characters,

1 See the full citation in the Work Cited.
2 Each volume of *Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury* was sent to the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* by the publisher separately, and they are sold separately.
often in all their suffering and pain” (39). Where Payne examines the aesthetics of empathy, Goldman addresses the aesthetics of hybridity by examining Woolf’s “feminist Ars Poetica” (56). This *Ars Poetica* is based on a hybrid signifier—namely, Flush, the anthropomorphized dog in Woolf’s eponymous faux biography. Woolf, writes Goldman, “frequently re-inscribes this sliding canine signifier in representations of struggles between men and women over artistic subjectivity” (48).

The theme of struggle appears throughout this collection, especially in the essays on war by Gillian Beer and Judith Allen. In “Woolf in Wartime, and Townsend Warner Too,” Beer interweaves Woolf’s diary entries on war along with those by Sylvia Townsend Warner. With the brief inclusion of her own childhood memories of the Second World War, Beer’s essay then becomes reflective. Beer is always careful to contextualize her readings and that is true here; she notes the way Woolf uses the techniques of mass-observation, which started in 1937, to record the experience of war in her diaries. Townsend Warner also referred to a contemporary development in her description of the impact of war—the wireless, which, Townsend Warner wrote, makes war “an atmospheric rather than a territorial phenomenon” (Townsend Warner qtd. in Beer 7). In her own examination of the connection between war and the media, “Virginia Woolf, ‘Patriotism,’ and ‘our prostituted fact-purveyors,’” Judith Allen shifts the emphasis to the way that government, through the media, “manufactur[es] consent” (18). Unlike the more contemplative tone of Beer’s essay, Allen’s is one of indignation. Rereading *Three Guineas* (1938) in 2006, Allen writes that the polemic’s “repeated references to ‘patriotism,’ ‘prostituted fact-purveyors,’ and ‘photographs of dead bodies and ruined houses,’” makes today’s readers “outraged that this text is so very relevant to the state of our world today” (18).

Woolf resisted war and its propaganda-making machine through her writing, and she also expressed varying degrees of resistance to the market economy, as Kathryn Simpson has shown throughout her work on this topic. In “Unpinning Economies of Desire: Gifts and the Market in ‘Moments of Being: ‘Slater’s Pins Have no Points,’” Simpson considers the dialectical relationship between gift-giving, which seems to be outside of capitalism, and capitalism, which—unlike gift-giving—is based on calculation and the clear maintenance of boundaries and is “rigorously organised by the laws of profit and loss” (92). At the same time, the commodity culture of capitalism “can stimulate and mobilise a profusion of desires in the consumer, as it fuels fantasy and excites imagination,” thus allowing “subversive libidinal desires to surface” (92). These desires can in turn “endanger the hierarchies and heteropatriarchal social order capitalism seems to keep in place” (92). Through her reading of “Moments of Being: ‘Slater’s Pins Have no Points,’” Simpson shows how Woolf holds up her story as a gift to readers for us to “make it yield what we like, to co-write and circulate it as we wish” (103).

In the essays on the Hogarth Press by Elizabeth Willson Gordon and Drew Patrick Shannon, we are reminded that Woolf, throughout the course of her career, was very much involved with the market economy even as she had an ambivalent and contradictory attitude toward it. The very title of Gordon’s “How Should One Sell a Book? Production Methods, Material Objects and Marketing at the Hogarth Press” indicates how the Hogarth Press, from its earliest days, was run as a business. Gordon discusses aspects of book production—production methods, material characteristics of the texts, circulation, and advertising—to explain how the Hogarth Press was able to maintain both artistic integrity and financial viability over a long period of time. Operating within the world of the commodity, the Woolfs “invoked a discourse of exclusivity regarding the Press productions” (109). And yet this discourse made their books popular and led to market success (120). Through their means and methods, the Woolfs achieved a balancing act between commerce and art (120). In “‘The Book is Still Warm’: The Hogarth Press in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Shannon explores another dimension of the relationship between aesthetics and production. In his memorable opening paragraphs, Shannon describes the feel of a book published by Hogarth and signed by Woolf herself; having been in Woolf’s hands, it became more “than just a book” as Shannon held it: “It fairly glowed with additional life” (124). This sense of life is Walter Benjamin’s aura, argues Shannon, and one to be contrasted with mass production. Shannon begins his essay with a discussion of the way the Woolfs conceived of the books they published as products. However, following their deaths, and especially now, the celebrity around Woolf and the Bloomsbury group has led to the “cult value” of the books published by the Hogarth Press (135).

In “Conversations in Bloomsbury: Colonial Writers and the Hogarth Press,” Anna Snaith considers some of the books published by Hogarth, namely, those on “anti-colonial thought in the interwar period” (138). Focusing on C. L. R. James and Mukl Raj Anand, Snaith analyzes what it meant for these colonial intellectuals to inhabit the geographical location of Bloomsbury and the impact that their physical presence in Bloomsbury had on their activism and writing (139). Bloomsbury, writes Snaith, “was a crucible for identities fractured by colonialism” (153). In her examination of James’s and Anand’s time spent in Bloomsbury and of their works published by Hogarth, Snaith reminds us to attend to the voices of those oppressed by the colonialism critiqued by the Bloomsbury Group.

Snaith’s is one of three essays that extends the reach of the Bloomsbury Group into the global context. Where Snaith concentrates on colonialism, Melba Cuddy-Keane’s “‘World Modelling: Paradigms of Global Consciousness in and around Virginia Woolf’” addresses Woolf’s own global thinking. How, asks Cuddy-Keane, “can we theorise global consciousness in a writer who does not write extensively and explicitly about travel, geography and cross-cultural encounters?” (158). To analyze Woolf, she answers, we need a “textual, situated, relational and comparative” approach (159). This approach involves three “dynamics”: a “de-occidentalising and reorientalizing” that in turn leads to a “multi-centric view of the world”; a “negotiating interconnectedness and atomisation” that then “complicate[s] individual, regional, national and global identities”; and incorporating the movement toward multidirectional flows (160). One would be hard-pressed not to apply this dynamic to fostering the global imagination in the world today.

Brenda R. Silver’s “Small Talk/New Networks: Virginia Woolf’s Virtual Publics” concludes the collection. Renowned for her research on Woolf in popular culture, Silver moves from the real to the virtual (or to another kind of reality): cyberspace. At the beginning of her essay Silver asks, how can the VWOOLF listserv, started in 1996, “be read as a contemporary inscription of what we think of as ‘Bloomsbury,’ reconfigured as a vibrant discursive manifestation of cyberspace and internet culture?” (177). Focusing mostly on VWOOLF, Silver goes on to compare it to Bloomsbury, which also constituted itself through contemplation and discussion (188). Is VWOOLF itself “a contemporary Bloomsbury?” she asks (193). Moving from the think tank that started this essay to the public sphere of cyberspace, we can see how the essays in Virginia Woolf’s *Bloomsbury* continue and extend the topical, exciting, and vibrant discussions that originated more than 100 years ago.

**Jeanne Dubino**
**Appalachian State University**

**Work Cited**

When Dora Carrington, a painter associated with the Bloomsbury Group, committed suicide in 1932, at the age of thirty-eight, the world lost a supreme practitioner of the epistolary art. “Letter writing,” Anne Chisholm writes in her introduction, “came naturally to her. [...] Indeed, much of her creative energy went into her letters, which were frequently small works of art in themselves, with her delicate curly writing decorating the pages and sprinkled with many drawings” (xx). Carrington’s letters are orthographic marvels, calligraphic delights, and pictorial fascinations that inspired the art historian Richard Shone to say “that he would gladly exchange all Carrington’s paintings for just one of her letters” (xix). Shone surely goes too far; her paintings are also remarkable and original; and no less an authority than Duncan Grant interrupted a speech at the Grosvenor Galleries retrospective of Carrington’s art in 1970 with a shouted “Nonsense!” in response to the claim that Bloomsbury failed to take her art seriously (Holbrook xx).

But it is useless to compare Carrington’s paintings and letters. Each are remarkable in their own ways, and it is an aesthetic shame and a felony of judgment that neither of the editors of her letters has given us this correspondence as in itself it really is. Yes, Carrington could not spell; yes, she punctuated idiosyncratically; yes, she capitalized words with reckless abandon. But as Chisholm writes, all of these peculiarities “only added to the effect” and makes them, in a phrase borrowed from Virginia Woolf, “completely unlike anything else in the habitable globe” (xx). Given the degree to which Carrington expended her significant and original creative energies in her letters; given the charm that issues from their very oddness; given the pleasure Chisholm herself takes in its heart? “No good letter,” Carrington’s intimate companion Lytton Lytton’s creed, not my invention!)” (380). These representative passages show how, as Gretchen Gerzina Holbrook wrote in her 1989 biography of Carrington, “[h]er life was a series of unresolved, opposing tensions” (xxvi). The fundamental tension was that between painting and love, work and art. Carrington, clearly attuned to these tensions in Carrington, observes, “her letters constantly show [that] she found her own nature difficult to understand and accept” (xviii). Chisholm generalizes from Carrington’s particularity and reads her as a case-study, emblematic of twentieth- and twenty-first-century women artists’ “perennial struggle [...] to balance their creative and their personal lives” (xviii). For this reason above all, Carrington is, for Chisholm, “strikingly relevant” today (xxvii).

Carrington’s relevance as an artist who struggled to balance her creative and personal life constitutes, too, her greatest relevance for Woolfians; readers of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany will thrill at one letter in particular, published here for the first time. In October 1920, Carrington responded to a letter from Brenan during the early months of their burgeoning love affair with a set of very Woolfian reflections on marriage and children, wondering “why so few women have reached any high plane of creators” (157). In later years, despite her constant admiration for Woolf, whom she found endlessly “fascinating” (368), Carrington would question the premise of A Room of One’s Own (1929): “I still don’t agree,” she tells Strachey following the book’s publication, “that poverty and a room of one’s own, is the explanation why women didn’t write poetry. If the Brontes could write in their Rectory, with cooking and housework, why not other clergyman’s daughters?” (368). But at the beginning of the 1920s she was quite sympathetic to Woolf when the latter was engaged in her New Statesman dust-up with Desmond MacCarthy, writing that, “as to the reason why females have never produced great writers, poets or artists or even musicians. Virginia gave bad education, and upbringing as the chief reason, also prejudice, and child bearing” (157). This comment comes in the opening lines of Carrington’s letter to Brenan. She continues:

I am sure it is impossible unless one is so rich that one need never look after a child [...] or so supremely competent that one can control a house, children, & husband & still preserve the concentration, and singleness of purpose that is necessary to all
Carrington ends this “sermon” to answer, in a remarkably observant portrait, Brenan’s question, “What is Virginia Woolf like” (158). It is a passage worth quoting at length both for its intrinsic interest and for the number of phrases begging to be used as essay and book titles:

Well I will send you when I get hold of one a photograph of her. That will be a truthful outside representation. Inside it’s rather difficult to describe her. She has been mad, seriously, twice. The last time for three or four years. One always feels this a little with her, as if she had lived a life one had not lived, and as if she had visions one could never see. She is the most imaginative person, always attacking people from odd angles, full of curiosity and very thorough with her analysis of characters. Her simplicity is her great charm. She has no snobbery but a real dignity because she recognizes her own value honestly. I am sure she would charm you. She has the manners of a man, unaffected, and earnest, & yet is very graceful & full of a woman’s competence. She cooks wonderful home-made bread, & makes country preserves, & pickles, and knows such names of plants, & enjoys friendships with such various people as her servants, a chemist in Richmond, old women who she reads to, authors, and young educated women. She has no prejudices, and is always absorbed in her immediate surroundings. Then she has a classical background which one feels in her conversation. She is a great reader of Greek. I always when I am with her feel overpowered with her brilliance, & charm. (158)

Carrington was nothing if not prodigiously observant of personalities and of the outer world through which she and her friends moved. This long letter to Brenan ends with her description of a walk in the countryside near her and Strachey’s home at Tidmarsh, in the course of which she had noticed,

dangling in the sun, on the bar of an old rusty field-roller two adders, which some game keeper had caught and killed, and hung there. They were the most lovely creatures. I had never held an adder in my hand before. […] I wanted to take one back with me to draw. But Lytton was against it, as they were long dead. (159)

And so, she leaves the adders on the machinery and returns home with her “Dearest Lytton,” acceding once more to his wishes. But not before she observes—with eyes preternaturally sensitive to the outsides of things and a mind absorbed by the question whether to marry and bear children, and what it would mean for her art to do so—one final, emblematic vision:

we saw a cow give birth to a calf in a field, and almost the minute afterwards she rose up & walked across a little river ditch, with the absurd little white calf, with its knees rocking together, and its natal cord dripping in the sun, stumbling after her, like some clumsy big dog. […] The beauty of the country rends me inside. (159-60).

Nobody who writes letters like this should ever be ignored.

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University of Massachusetts Lowell

Works Cited

Celia Marshik’s fascinating and incisive study *At the Mercy of Their Clothes: Modernism, the Middlebrow, and British Garment Culture* explores how clothes construct our identities, how garments connect with contemporary social history, how writers use clothing and fashion to make meaning in their texts, and how, perhaps, clothing may “turn a person into a thing” (4). Organized into four chapters and a “coda,” the book is wide-ranging, but Woolf scholars will note that the study begins with a brief consideration of Miss Kilman’s mackintosh coat in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) as illustrating “gendered expectations and economic realities” (1)—a key point that links Woolf with contemporary writers and historical circumstances, as well as considers Woolf’s own relationship with clothing. Analyzing British fiction across a range of modernist and middlebrow texts, Marshik asserts that clothing engages with a particular historical moment and social context and, in regard to Woolf in particular, advances the important work of Jane Garrity, Catherine Gregg, R. S. Koppen, and Nicola Luckhurst. Supported by an archive of periodicals, cartoons, advertisements, and advice columns, Marshik employs the vocabulary of “thing theory” to demonstrate how “literature intervenes in, departs from, or affectively mobilizes associations with and histories of particular garments” while asserting the dynamic between the individual and clothing (6)—that is, between the singular self and thing. Marshik’s chapters provide detailed accounts of a particular item of clothing—an evening gown, mackintosh coat, fancy dress, and secondhand clothing—across a variety of texts to emphasize the materiality of the individual’s experience with the animated “thing” and its power to bring attention to the making and unmaking of the self.

Beginning with a cartoon appearing in *Punch* (May 1, 1929), the first chapter, “What Do Women Want? At the Mercy of the Evening Gown,” emphasizes the historicity and social context of the evening gown followed by a theoretical analysis of literary appearances of the garment. The “Poor Clara” cartoon depicting a bewildered young woman in evening dress captioned “Always so at the mercy of her clothes” exemplifies what Marshik calls the “range of associations” that accrued to the evening gown by the early twentieth century and illustrates how the evening gown can give pleasure at home but can also “turn on its wearer” in public (26). Marshik considers the evening gown in the literature of Rebecca West, Jean Rhys, and Woolf; in film and popular fiction; as a gendered “thing” with a particular history; and in its role in mourning, as seen in the black evening dress Vanessa Stephen wore after Stella Duckworth’s death in 1897 (40). An illustrative analysis of Ottoline Morrell’s unique and often-dubious fashion choices provides an excellent example of how connections to time, place, and human beings animate the garment. Connecting Woolf’s personal unease with gowns—traditional, gendered, and revealing—with Mabel Waring’s anxiety in “The New Dress” (1927) and Morrell’s occasional caricature in fiction, Marshik shows how “the impersonal agency of the gown intervenes in a complex social situation that depends on the careful calibration of human and non-human objects” (60).

Turning to the everyday in Chapter Two, “Wearable Memorials: Into and Out of the Trenches with the Modern Mac,” Marshik traces the mackintosh coat’s specific British group identity across a wide spectrum of literature from James Joyce to P. G. Wodehouse, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Virginia Woolf. In contrast to the hand-made, one-of-a-kind evening gown, Marshik sees the mass-produced mackintosh and the connotations carried with it, turning people into undifferentiated things (68). Marshik describes the mac’s journey from the de-individuation of the British Army mac worn in World War I, to the civilian population’s adoption of
the garment as a signifier of their participation in the war effort and as *momento mori*, as well as a Harrod's fashion statement, with each turn emphasized by several well-chosen and rare visuals to complement the text. Returning to Miss Kilman's mac, Marshik illustrates the "thing" as the embodiment of identity, sexuality, class, "traumatizing object," and reminder of war (98-99).

Fancy dress, defined as "a costume arranged according to the wearer's fancy" (OED), presents a unique lens through which Marshik examines early twentieth century sartorial practices and representations in Chapter Three, "Aspiration to the Extraordinary." Here Marshik addresses the relationship between individuals and what they wear to "transcend their ordinary selves through fancy dress" (103). Tracing the prevalence of fancy dress through advertisements, photographs, *Punch* cartoons, magazines, and advice manuals, the chapter establishes the popularity of fancy dress in both upper and middle class British society, along with the inherent contradiction: fancy dress enables an idealized self yet places wearers at the mercy of their clothes by reinforcing the subject/object or person/thing binary. An extended discussion of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and Sayers' *Murder Must Advertise* (1933) illustrates the complexity of fancy dress in popular fiction. Working from Bloomsbury's lived engagement with fancy dress from the Dreadnought Hoax to the Artists Revels of 1909, interwar costume parties of the 1920s and 1930s, and the "Alice and Wonderland" parade of January 1930—with Woolf dressing as the March Hare—Marshik suggests that these experiences moved Woolf to confront the complexity of fancy dress in *Orlando* (1928) where "selves are multiple and dependent on what one wears" (130) and Jacob's Room (1922) where Fanny Elmer finds fancy dress "a transient—and ultimately disappointing—form of self expression" (130). In the end, few characters can attain a new self, but fancy dress evidences the ability to "work with" the individual who dons it (144).

If fancy dress transforms the self, then secondhand clothes consider the relationship between original owner and subsequent wearer. In Chapter Four "Serialized Selves: Style, Identity, and the Problem of the Used Garment," Marshik interrogates residual identities accreted to the materiality of garments that move from person to person, asserting that used clothes suggest "self and surface are so connected that garments can detach from and mobilize aspects of the initial wearer's identity" (145). Modernist writers like Joyce, Rhys, and Woolf produce characters and narrators who illustrate how the self is distributed by the garment with the possible breakdown of borders between the original owner and subsequent wearer; the used, the secondhand, becomes a site of conflict. Marshik provides a pointed and thorough survey of scholarship, historical sources, and popular culture ephemera to establish the historical popularity of secondhand clothes, particularly during World War I. An analysis of multiple narratives reveals uneasy relationships from comic to threatening as Marshik concludes that, for modernist writers, secondhand clothes "degrade, [...] muddle, and [...] qualify the person who wears them" (176).

Profound changes to the relationship between the individual and garments resonate in "Coda: Precious Clothing," where the World War II campaign in the midst of shortages "Make-Do-and-Mend" takes us back to the restrictions on clothing during the Great War and into the Second World War (179). The early twentieth century brought increased choices in apparel for British citizens, yet clothing may reflect uncertainty about the relationship between persons and things. Marshik illuminates social issues—class, war, gender, and identity—through the evening gown, the macintosh, fancy dress, and secondhand garments as animated, unpredictable things that act on us. This book's contribution to literary analysis, fashion studies, and scholarship is significant, and its readability, gathering of contemporary sources, and extensive notes and source materials are impressive. It is unfortunate to see in this important book a misidentification of Woolf's recollection that she and Vanessa had "dressed ourselves up as Gauguin pictures" for the Second Post-

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**Lois Gilmore**

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**Works Cited**


Post-Individualist Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*”; Kathryn Van Wert of the University of Minnesota, Duluth will present “Virginia Woolf *contra* Deleuze: New Materialism and the Challenge of Ontological Incompleteness”; and Jane Garrity of the University of Colorado at Boulder will present “Objects of Emotion.” I will chair the panel. Elisa Kay Sparks has generously offered to have the MLA Woolf gathering at her home in West Seattle when the time comes. We will share those details once we have them.

I am also happy to share a sneak peek at the 30th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf, hosted by Benjamin Hagen at the University of South Dakota from June 11-14, 2020. Benjamin explains that:

the theme, ‘Profession and Performance,’ brings together two significant terms. The first mattered deeply to Woolf. It calls to mind not only her sense of herself as a writer but also the set of specialized occupations she addresses in *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas* (areas of study and livelihood traditionally reserved for the sons of educated men). The second term invokes the ACVW’s commitment over the past three decades to the arts, to theater, to music, to the spoken word, and to their resonances with the performance / performativity of Woolf’s life and writing. “But the combination of ‘Profession and Performance,’ he continues, “occasions and encourages a cluster of other meanings and projects, including the dynamic link between Woolf’s social critique (what she professed) and her art (its performance); modernism’s role in the professionalization of literature and criticism; the livelihoods and lifestyles of Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group; investigations of identity and community; Woolfian meditations on professions (i.e., on occupations, commitments, allegiances, or declarations); common reading and specialized study; profession as (public) performance (and vice versa); questions of affect and attachment; reflections on the selves and the worlds we profess / perform in daily life, in politics, in ethics, in institutions, and in ongoing efforts to teach and learn; the performative life of professionalization (or the subversion of professionalization); and many more.

Benjamin’s careful early planning gives us much to think about in the months ahead!

The Society officers also look forward to judging this year’s Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay Prize and will announce the winner later in the summer (please see page 2 of this issue for the call for submissions). It is gratifying have seen so many students engaged in Woolf studies—carrying the torch in meaningful, creative ways.

Last but not least, the Society is seeking applications from those who are interested in serving as Membership Coordinators. Lois Gilmore and Marilyn Smith are stepping down after five years of dedicated service in handling the membership documentation. Many thanks to them for all their hard work! Below is the description of the position from the By-Laws of the Society:

> The Membership Coordinator(s) shall keep records of dates and renewal of membership; answer emails regarding membership; coordinate the membership lists between the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, Newsletter, Treasurer and IVWS Website.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer and look forward to seeing some of you in Cincinnati!

*Kristin Czarnecki*  
*President, IVWS*

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1 See http://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS/about-us.html for more information about the By-Laws.
Greetings to one and all! I hope everyone is enjoying the beautiful spring weather as the semester draws to a close. IVWS members have been busy, so here we go!

First, we look forward to gathering at the 29th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf, hosted by Drew Shannon at Mount Saint Joseph University in Cincinnati, Ohio, from June 6-9, 2019. The conference theme, “Virginia Woolf and Social Justice,” gathers people from across the globe to consider Woolf’s writings on equality, opportunity, power, and privilege, among many other topics. Plenary sessions include Elizabeth Abel speaking on Woolf, James Baldwin, and Social Justice; Anne Fernald and Tonya Krouse on Woolf in the Era of #MeToo; Ellen McLaughlin on Woolf, Theater, and Activism; Drew Shannon and Madelyn Detloff on “Woolf, Bloomsbury, and Queer Conviviality”; Erica Delsandro and Kristin Czarnecki on Woolf and Inclusivity; and a roundtable discussion titled “Woolf and the Future of the Humanities in Our Current Political Climate.” Other special events include a reception at Cincinnati’s beautiful Mercantile Library, a performance of Leonard Woolf’s play The Hotel, and a visit to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Many, many thanks to Drew for preparing such a wonderful conference!

In other conference news, Mary Wilson presided over the IVWS’s guaranteed panel at MLA in Chicago in January and provides us with the following report: “Our focus was ‘Night and Day at 100,’” Mary writes,

We aimed to consider the twenty-first-century legacy of Woolf’s so-called “nineteenth-century novel.” Mary Jean Corbett of Miami University of Ohio opened the panel with a paper examining “Feminist Generations in Night and Day.” Drawing on her just-completed manuscript on Woolf in late-Victorian contexts, Mary Jean’s paper reimagined the “Victorian” descriptor for Night and Day by linking it not just to the novel’s realist form but also to the juxtaposition of late-Victorian and emerging modern middle-class women’s social activism. Moyang Li of Rutgers University focused on Katherine Hilbery in her paper about “Pure Mathematics as an Alternate Literary Mode.” She began with a straightforward question: Why does Woolf make Katherine a mathematician? Moyang discussed Bertrand Russell’s writings about mathematics for a general audience and situated her reading of Night and Day in a wider field of texts that allow her to track literary notions of mathematics. John Young of Marshall University, in his paper, “‘That vagueous phosphoresence: Mrs. Hilbery in Mrs. Dalloway,’ considered the legacy of Night and Day by exploring the return Woolf makes to some of its characters in Mrs. Dalloway. Not only Mrs. Hilbery but also characters from Jacob’s Room and, of course, The Voyage Out appear at Clarissa Dalloway’s party and hint at this wider universe of Woolf characters coming together in that novel. John suggested that Woolf revisits characters from Night and Day in this manner due to her changing status as a novelist and as a publisher.”

Mary states that:

My contribution to the panel, ‘The Place of Night and Day,’ focused on Night and Day’s difficult position in Woolf’s body of work. Critics have tended to see the novel as an apprentice work, drawing connections between Katharine Hilbery’s and Mary Datchet’s attempts to find their places in a modernizing world to Woolf’s progression toward her mature narrative art. I argued that such an interpretation depends on readers’ knowledge of the overall arc of Woolf’s career. I suggested that we might be better able to understand the contemporary place of this novel, which is so deeply concerned with the question of literary legacy, by using the implicit cross-generational connections to reimagine the literary tradition that Woolf’s own works have remade.”

Woolfians at MLA and in the Chicago area met for dinner on Friday, January 4th. As Paula Maggio reports, “For the second time in recent years, Virginia Woolf scholars and common readers and their guests gathered at Shaw’s Crab House in Chicago for the annual Woolf dinner at the MLA. The group numbered eleven, with a variety of vibrant discussions taking place around the long table. The talk ranged from Woolf and teaching Woolf to the upcoming 29th Annual International Conference at Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati to personal experiences as budding feminist graduate students at Ivy League colleges during the early stages of second wave feminism.”

The IVWS panel at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture in February was also a rousing success. Panelist and chair Zoë Rodine reports:

Patricia Morgne Cramer’s paper, ‘Hidden Treasures: Rhoda as Socrates’ Lesbian Sister,’ presented a thorough and historically informed reading of The Waves as a novel of lesbian desire, positing Woolf’s project as a twentieth-century response to Plato’s Symposium that answered her Bloomsbury colleagues’ critiques of feminine intellect and presented a lesbian (as opposed to gay) model for knowledge and relationality. As hinted at in her title, Cramer sees The Waves and A Room of One’s Own as part of the same intellectual project and argues that Rhoda as ‘Socrates’ sister’ is the anchor for the novel’s critique of homosexual male failure to interrogate and disrupt models of domination and submission.

Next, we heard from Zoë Rodine, who presented a paper entitled “‘I am the Foam’: Woolf’s Waves and Modernist Embodiment.” Building on the idea that Woolf creates a quantum world through her wave imagery, Rodine suggests that The Waves theorizes a modernist body materialized through wave forms that allow for a form of subjectivity that exceeds the bounded, humanist body. The paper continues to argue that this new mode of wave embodiment links Woolf to later thinkers across the Atlantic like Ralph Ellison and Sun Ra and suggests a new means of conceptualizing transatlantic modernism. Emma Buriss-Janssen presented the final paper, “‘suspended, without being, in limbo’: Temporality and Abortion in Virginia Woolf’s Between the Acts,” which focused on the way that the recurrent recounting of sexual violence and the abortion narrative lurking beneath the surface of Woolf’s interwar novel upend heteronormative time. Presenting evidence from newspapers about the 1938 events surrounding the Bourne Trial and historical contexts about abortion laws, Burris-Janssen argued that Between the Acts pushes back on the language of choice and liberal subjectivity that surrounds abortion by illuminating rape as the logic that structures the domestic sphere and the lives of women.

Jane Garrity proposed the IVWS’s guaranteed panel at MLA 2020 in Seattle, “Grossly Material Things”: Woolf and the New Materialism. Matthew Gannon of Boston College will present “Political Ecology and (The Society Column continues on Page 43)