VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE

EDITED BY JEANNE DUBINO
Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace
Also by Jeanne Dubino

*Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (co-editor with Beth Carole Rosenberg)
Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace

Edited by
Jeanne Dubino
To Andrew, and the five of us
# Contents

Acknowledgments xi  
List of Contributors xiii  
List of Abbreviations xvii  

Introduction 1  
Jeanne Dubino  

## Part I Woolf’s Engagement with the Marketplace  

One Reading, Taking Notes, and Writing: Virginia Stephen’s Reviewing Practice 27  
Beth Rigel Daugherty  

Two Circulating Ideas and Selling Periodicals: Leonard Woolf, the *Nation and Athenaeum*, and Topical Debate 43  
Elizabeth Dickens  

Three Woolf’s Editorial Self-Censorship and Risk-Taking in *Jacob’s Room* 57  
Vara Neverow  

Four Between Writing and Truth: Woolf’s Positive Nihilism 73  
Jeanette McVicker  

## Part II Woolf’s Relationship to the Marketplace  

Five How to Strike a Contemporary: Woolf, Mansfield, and Marketing Gossip 91  
Katie Macnamara
Six  Something of a Firebrand: Virginia Woolf and the Literary Reputation of Emily Brontë  
Heather Bean  
pp. 107

Seven  Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein: Commerce, Bestsellers, and the Jew  
Karen Leick  
pp. 121

Part III  Woolf’s Marketplaces

Eight  Virginia Woolf and the Middlebrow Market of the Familiar Essay  
Caroline Pollentier  
pp. 137

Nine  Woolf Studies and Periodical Studies  
Patrick Collier  
pp. 151

Ten  The “Keystone Public” and Virginia Woolf: A Room of One’s Own, Time and Tide, and Cultural Hierarchies  
Melissa Sullivan  
pp. 167

Eleven  “Murdering an Aunt or Two”: Textual Practice and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf’s Metropolitan Market  
John K. Young  
pp. 181

Part IV  Marketing Woolf

Twelve  The “Grand Lady of Literature”: Virginia Woolf in Italy under Fascism  
Elisa Bolchi  
pp. 199

Thirteen  Translating Orlando in 1930s Fascist Italy: Virginia Woolf, Arnoldo Mondadori, and Alessandra Scalero  
Sara Villa  
pp. 209

Fourteen  Appropriating Virginia Woolf for the New Humanism: Seward Collins and The Bookman, 1927–1933  
Yuzu Uchida  
pp. 223
Contents

Fifteen  Don’t Judge a Cover by Its Woolf: Book Cover Images and the Marketing of Virginia Woolf’s Work 237
Jennie-Rebecca Falcetta

Index 253
I am grateful to the contributors—it has been a great pleasure to work with you all. I want to thank Madelyn Detloff and Diana Royer, coordinators of the 2007 Virginia Woolf conference where I conceived of this project, and where Beth Daugherty, Patrick Collier, Katie Macnamara, Karen Leick, Jennie–Rebecca Falcetta, and John K. Young presented the first versions of the essays that appear in this anthology. Elizabeth Dickens, Yuzu Uchida, and Elisa Bolchi delivered their papers first at the 2008 Woolf conference, organized by Eleanor McNees; and Jeanette McVicker at the 2009 conference, organized by Anne Fernald. Indeed, this collection has benefited from all of the Woolf conferences—from the panels and plenaries, the proceedings, the dialogue, and the community and fellowship of friends and scholars. I also want to extend heartfelt thanks to my friends and colleagues Ziba Rashidian, Alexandra Hellenbrand, Lynne Jakubauskas, Merryl Reichbach, Jackie Oluoch Aridi, Emilia Ilieva, Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and to my families, for all their support and encouragement. I am grateful to the Provost of Appalachian State University, Stan Aeschleman, who granted me a sabbatical in 2009–2010, and to Bob Lyman, who was ASU’s Dean of Arts and Sciences. I would like to thank the editor, Brigitte Shull, and the anonymous reader, whose comments were invaluable. My thanks to Lee Norton, Matt Robison, Joel Breuklander, and Rohini Krishnan for their assistance in preparing this manuscript for publication. I would like to express my gratitude for permission to publish the following:

Extracts from the unpublished notebooks of Virginia Stephen © The Estate of Virginia Woolf, 2010. By permission of the Society of Authors, as the literary representative of the Estate of Virginia Woolf.

Passages from the letters of Arnoldo Mondadori at the Historical Archive of Arnoldo Mondadori. By permission of the Arnoldo and Alberto Mondadori Foundation in Milan.
HEATHER BEAN is a PhD candidate in English Literary Studies at York University, Toronto, Canada.

ELISA BOLCHI teaches English and Comparative Literatures at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan. One of her most recent publications includes Il paese della bellezza (Milan: I.S.U. Università Cattolica, 2007).

PATRICK COLLIER is Associate Professor and Assistant Chair of English at Ball State University, where he teaches nineteenth- and twentieth-century British literature. He is the author of Modernism on Fleet Street (London: Ashgate, 2006) and many articles on the relations between literature and journalism.

BETH RIGEL DAUGHERTY is Professor of English at Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio. She edited, with Mary Beth Pringle, Approaches to Teaching Woolf’s To the Lighthouse (New York: MLA, 2001), and has published many articles on Woolf, including one for Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and one in Approaches to Teaching Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway (New York: MLA, 2009). She is currently working on a book entitled The Education of a Woman Writer: Virginia Woolf’s Apprenticeship.

ELIZABETH DICKENS is a lecturer in the Book and Media Studies Program at the University of Toronto, where she recently completed her PhD in English and Book History and Print Culture. Her research focuses on the relationship between the book trade and weekly review periodicals in early twentieth-century Britain.

JEANNE DUBINO is Professor of English at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. With Beth Rosenberg she co-edited Virginia Woolf and the Essay (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997). She has published
articles on Woolf, travel literature, popular culture, and postcolonial writers.

**JENNIE-REBECCA FALCETTA** is Assistant Professor of English at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut. Her publications include essays on Woolf, Seamus Heaney, Marianne Moore, and Thomas Malory.


**KATIE MACNAMARA** is a PhD candidate in English at Indiana University. She has published papers on early modern and modernist approaches to the essay form, and enjoys writing creative nonfiction herself.

**JEANETTE MCVICKER** is Professor of English at the State University of New York-Fredonia. She has published many articles and essays on Woolf, and has edited two volumes (with Laura Davis) of the *Selected Papers from the Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*.

**VARA NEVEROW** is Professor of English and Women’s Studies at Southern Connecticut State University. She has published extensively on Woolf. Her most recent publications include the introduction and annotations for the 2008 Harcourt edition of *Jacob’s Room*, and an essay on Woolf and city aesthetics for the forthcoming volume, *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*.

**CAROLINE POLLENTIER** is a doctoral student at the University of Paris 7, France. Her dissertation focuses on the aesthetics and politics of the ordinary in Woolf’s essays, and she has published several articles on the essays.

**MELISSA SULLIVAN** is Assistant Professor of English at Rosemont College in Rosemont, Pennsylvania. She has published (and has forthcoming) articles on middlebrow writers and *Time and Tide*; and Woolf, Rose Macaulay, and cultural hierarchies.

**YUZU UCHIDA** is a PhD student at Waseda University, Tokyo. Her thesis examines Woolf in American periodicals.

**SARA VILLA** is a postdoctoral fellow in a joint program between the State University of Milan and Columbia University’s Center for Jazz Studies. She has published a monograph on Orlando, *I due Orlando*. Le
Contributors

ABBREVIATIONS

AROO  A Room of One’s Own
BA    Between the Acts
CDB   The Captain’s Death Bed and Other Essays
CE    Collected Essays (4 vols.)
CR 1  The Common Reader
CR 2  The Common Reader, Second Series
D     The Diary of Virginia Woolf (5 vols.)
DM    The Death of the Moth and Other Essays
E     The Essays of Virginia Woolf (5 vols. to date)
F     Flush
JR    Jacob’s Room
L     The Letters of Virginia Woolf (6 vols.)
MB    Moments of Being
MD    Mrs. Dalloway
ND    Night and Day
O     Orlando
PA    A Passionate Apprentice
TG    Three Guineas
TL    To the Lighthouse
W     The Waves
Y     The Years
VO    The Voyage Out
WD    A Writer’s Diary
Introduction

Jeanne Dubino

Over the course of her career, starting with “The Decay of Essay-writing” and concluding with “Reviewing,” Virginia Woolf wrote about the literary marketplace. In her diaries and letters, in her fiction and extended essays, and in her reviews and literary manifestoes, she described her feelings about the commodification of printed word, her multifaceted participation in the sphere of publishing, the practices of editors and publishers, the interconnection between ideas and economics, the profession of reviewing and criticism, and above all, the relationships between writers and readers. Since the 1990s critics have recognized and written about Woolf’s involvement with these and other dimensions of the marketplace, and more recently, as Kathryn Simpson notes, there has been “sustained critical interest” which in turn “has opened up exciting new ways of reading Woolf’s writings” (“Economies” 18; emphasis added). This volume is the first collection of essays devoted entirely to Woolf in the literary marketplace. Building on the work of past critics, the contributors to this anthology address Woolf’s involvement in the realm of commodity culture.

To understand the role Woolf played in the world of buying and selling, it will be useful, first, to provide background information on current directions in modernist studies more broadly, and, second, on Woolf scholarship more particularly. Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace is part of a movement to close the gulf between high art and mass culture described by Andreas Huyssen in his seminal 1986 After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism. The discourse insisting on this great divide began to take hold in the late nineteenth century and was so firmly entrenched by the age of modernism that,
as Patrick Collier writes, the productive nexus of literature, newspapers, and politics of the nineteenth century seemed “unimaginable” (Modernism 201). For modernists, crass commercialism was invading the realm of high culture, and so they sought a space detached from the marketplace (Delany 103, 124). As if taking their cue from literary modernists, critics themselves, until the 1990s, maintained this divide, studying the text as a finished object, in isolation from the material context in which it was produced (Dettmar and Watt 1).

The past two decades have witnessed a shift in modernist studies. At the same time critics are considering the ways modernists sought to separate themselves from the marketplace, they are also recognizing how English literature has, since the early modern era, been shaped by market forces, and, in addition, the way the study of English literature itself “began in Grub Street” (Treglown and Bennett ix; see also Latham and Scholes 517). Since the appearance of Huyssen’s After the Great Divide literary critics have been exploring the heterogeneity within modernism—the multiple, ambivalent, conflicting, but dynamic and creative relations modernists had with mass culture (Collier, Modernism 2)—and to that end their work investigates the material circumstances of textual production and the various ways modernists engaged with the marketplace.

These important studies reveal that modernism is not only a literature whose roots are located in the field of commerce but also a “strategy” inviting its own commodification (Rainey 3). Far from opposing commerce, modernists made use of the marketplace to promote their own forms and ambitions, as Mark Morrisson and Aaron Jaffe note. Jaffe describes their participation in an economy based upon the fetishization of the literary “original,” a commodity in short supply (5), and he cites the Hogarth Press’s use of the limited edition as an example of the way modernists like the Woolfs used “scarcity as an iconoclastic instrument of self-promotion and valuation” (16).

Along with their participation in the economics of scarcity, modernists made use of the economics of abundance—namely, in its form of the burgeoning field of mass market media, with journalism at the fore—to promote their careers and their writing. At the beginning of the twentieth century, writing for the press was lucrative and few modernists could resist its rewards (Bingham). More significantly, the concomitant rise of journalism, the supposedly lowbrow medium, and literary modernism, resulted in the battle of the brows—low, middle, and high—and modernists invariably found themselves swept up in these debates (Cuddy-Keane, Virginia Chapter One; Collier, Modernism 3)
in fact, highly diverse and flourishing—according to Joseph McAleer, 50,000 magazines were published in Britain in 1900 (25)—the mass media was constructed by modernists as a monolithic entity in decline. This construction, as Morrisson notes, was a rhetorical ploy, providing them with a useful “enemy . . . against which to position their work—in effect, to promote, to market their own efforts to use modernist literature and art to reshape public culture” (9).

Virginia Woolf came of age in the midst of this fray between mass culture and serious literature, and she became a part of both sides from the get-go. As a writer who took to journalism with the specific goals of making money and gaining entry into the literary world, she resembled her fellow modernists, including Joyce and Mansfield. It is significant that Woolf spent twenty years, the first half of her career, primarily as a literary journalist, and that even after she had attained fame as a novelist (and a sizable income) she continued to write essays and reviews for literary publications until the very end of her life. Leila Brosnan and other critics are right to emphasize that we should not read her essays divorced from “material circumstances of production, since most of [them] were, in fact, first produced as literary journalism in the commercial public sphere” (41).

In her roles as journalist and novelist, Woolf was clearly a literary professional, but this was a title she eschewed as a woman writing in a sexist and capitalist world. Her feminist politics, the idea of publication in particular, and, more generally, the experience of exposure in the public domain, all combined in ways to make her uncomfortable. The rising consumerism that marked the modern era was typically inflected as feminine, as Rita Felski has argued in *The Gender of Modernity*, and in this new consumer culture, women were defined by the commodities they bought and by the very process of consumption. At the same time Woolf felt ambivalent about the association of women with mass culture, she felt uneasy about joining the ranks of professional working women who were increasingly involved with its production. As Anthea Trodd notes, Woolf decidedly did not want to be a “battered hack, . . . a recognized type for defining the woman writer as professional” (44). Finally, as is most evident in *Three Guineas*, Woolf objected to the professional sphere because of its alignment with men, and because of its exclusivity—“its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed” (74).

However, Woolf also did not want to be dismissed as an amateur or dilettante (Elliott and Wallace 72). She wanted to be taken seriously, and literary journalism itself gave her “a sense of her own worth
within the industry as a paid professional” (Brosnan 87). As someone who, by and large, espoused the principles of feminism, Woolf understood “the importance of the professionalisation of women’s writing as an instrument of emancipation” (Gualtieri 69). Even a quick glance at Woolf’s life reveals how she in fact conducted herself very much like a professional writer. In his autobiography Leonard Woolf, stressing her discipline, compares the way “she went into her room and sat down to write her novel” to “the daily regularity of a stockbroker who commutes every day between his house in the suburbs and his office in the neighbourhood of Throgmorton Street” (Downhill 52). Woolf applied herself to her journalism as well; Leonard noted that she did not submit any article without rewriting it several times (Editorial Note vii–viii). Like any professional, Woolf was aware of her own monetary worth and paid close attention to how much she earned (Lee, “‘Crimes’” 117). She knew that “appearing in the right pages could boost an author’s reputation and increase sales of future books” (Whitworth, Virginia 88).

From the very beginning of her writing career, when she was still Virginia Stephen, Woolf took careful pains to teach herself how to be a literary professional. Free run of her father’s library, along with subscriptions to lending libraries, gave her unrestricted exposure to an abundant array of books, and from an early age she taught herself how to write about them. Her early journals are exercise books, a “record of a painstaking apprenticeship in professional writing” (Gualtieri 30). From her early self-training, Stephen moved into social circles to avail herself of opportunities for publication. She officially started her career as a professional writer in 14 December 1904, with the publication of a review in the Guardian, an Anglo-Catholic newspaper (and possibly sooner; see Daugherty’s essay in this collection). As soon as she began to publish, she quickly started to learn the power of the editor, the conventions of journalism, and how to appeal to a variety of commercial audiences. She learned how to write for the Times Literary Supplement, founded in 1902 as “an exclusive forum for the discussion of the best books” (Trodd 36), along with a number of other journals, including, at the beginning of her career, the Guardian, the Cornhill Magazine, Academy & Literature, and the National Review. Because she was so determined to make a living as a professional writer she did not pursue a typical modernist venue, the little magazine, but rather publications that monetarily rewarded her for her labor (Elliott and Wallace 71; see also Bishop 287). One magazine that significantly rewarded her was Vogue, the most avant-garde publication of its day, according to its editors (Brosnan 2). By the time she published her five articles in
Vogue} between 1924 and 1926, Woolf figured prominently in the world of high-end literary journalism (Brosnan 2). She even, to some extent, colluded with Vogue “to construct an image of herself,” as Jane Garrity writes, that made “fashionable her cerebral, antifashion persona,” an image that persists in mass circulation today (204, 213; see below).14

However, as her own close contemporaries recognized, Woolf was hardly “the exquisite, cloistered Virginia” promoted by Vogue (“Christopher Isherwood” 177) but a competent professional, and her proficiency was clearly evident in her role as a co-owner of the Hogarth Press. She “had an ambitious, uncompromising, and competitive side” (Willis 53), and closely attended both to the sales of her own books and to those of the Hogarth Press (Garrity 196). As its co-owner, she also followed the market value of other authors (Elliott and Wallace 26). In addition to keeping track of financial affairs, she read manuscripts, the most time-consuming part of her involvement in the Press, and took part in virtually every practical aspect of production, including proofreading, typesetting, stitching and sewing covers (and searching for paper to bind the books), and wrapping and mailing copies to purchasers (see also Young’s essay in this collection). Her role of publisher also took her out into the public; along with Leonard and the staff she answered inquiries, and together they “traveled” their books to dealers throughout England. In her role as publisher Woolf gained an in-depth knowledge of and expertise in the entire realm of book production.15

With the know-how they quickly learned in their profession as publishers, the Woolfs could have turned the Hogarth Press into “a bigger, fatter, and richer business” (L. Woolf, Beginning 254). However, from the moment they established the Press in 1917 they were determined to maintain its “mongrel” status, resisting the pressure to expand into a major enterprise (L. Woolf, Downhill 77). While Hogarth did become, within a few years of its establishment, a “successful commercial publishing business” (L. Woolf, Beginning 254) in spite of the Woolfs’ original intentions not to make money out of it, it continued to be, for them, a “hobby” and “experiment” run along “amateurish” lines, with, initially, the printing done during their spare time in the afternoons on their own press and in their own home.16 Though they moved from publishing only short works by close friends and colleagues to full-sized book-length manuscripts, some of them submitted by the public at large, they continued to cultivate Bloomsbury friends and their affiliates through the duration of their co-ownership of the Press. In his history of Hogarth, Willis describes how Leonard sheltered the Press in a number of other ways, including avoiding “contact
with other publishers” and remaining “aloof from the various organizations of the book trade.”

However, even before the Hogarth Press’s first publication in 1917, the Woolfs considered expansion (Willis 18). In 1920 they took on Ralph Partridge as the first of their many assistants, and committed themselves to publishing full-length books, including *Jacob’s Room*, in 1922. With the publication of S. S. Koteliansky’s translation of Maxim Gorky’s *Reminiscences of Tolstoi* in 1920 Hogarth became “a small-scale international publisher,” and its listings expanded to include further translations in Russian and also Italian and German (Willis 80, 81). Leonard’s decision in 1921 to take on the English publications of the International Psycho-Analytical Library led to the Press playing an important role in Freud’s success and fame in Great Britain.

Other instances of the Woolfs’ acumen include their decision to print only original work (and not reprints of classics), and to diversify beyond fiction, poetry, and translations into all manner of non-fiction. While the Woolfs were “obviously more literary” than other beginners, as Willis notes (15), they were also more business-like, even to the extent of not giving out complimentary copies. Their niece Angelica Garnett recalls Leonard making her pay for a copy of *Flush* (108). They were not above marketing and advertising, as is indicated, for example, by their decision to use a logo in their ads, and one designed by the well-known painter, E. McKnight Kauffer. However, to have gone too commercial would have meant losing their symbolic or cultural capital, as Ted Bishop notes. Bishop considers the way the Woolfs, for example, selected stylized but understated dust jackets to “preserve their distinction, their cultural capital, while pursuing the increased sales that can only come from moving beyond the avant-garde to the bourgeois audience” (52).

The Woolfs were proud of the way they maintained this balance between the literary and the commercial, and, Leonard, reflecting back on his life, expressed satisfaction in having run “an extremely efficient publishing business.” Indeed, as Willis writes, the “Hogarth Press, distinctive among most of the small presses in England, printed modern writers and stayed afloat” (41). This success, however, came at some cost; both Woolfs often wrote about how much the Press encroached into their lives, and on occasion they contemplated selling it (Porter 285; Willis 68). Eventually, in 1938, John Lehmann bought out Virginia’s share, and she was freed at last of the most time-consuming burden of all, reading mounds of manuscripts and writing rejection letters.
For all the frustration and annoyance it provoked, the Hogarth Press did allow Woolf the freedom to write what she liked. It is notable that her first experimental piece, “The Mark on the Wall,” was published by Hogarth (Marcus 133). The Press may have taken away hours of Woolf’s time, but it also gave her a room of her own, a space free, as Willis notes, of the presence of a publisher’s reader (400). In this a space, “somewhere between the private, the coterie, and the public sphere” (Marcus 145), Woolf quickly developed the confidence to attack Edwardian critics like Arnold Bennett, among others, and to formulate and publicize her own modernist aesthetic (Willis 61).

As a co-owner of the Hogarth Press, Woolf was able to maintain and expand her professional contacts by staying “in touch with young writers, new movements, women’s affairs, politics” (Willis 400). The range of books published by Hogarth—the Hogarth Essays, highlighting the cultural and political debates of the day on “literature, art, politics, law, history, feminism, music” (Willis 109); the poetry, starting in 1919 with the publication of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and, in the 1930s, featuring the most prominent poets of the day, namely the “network of Auden–Spender–Isherwood–Day–Lewis–Lehmann” (Willis 203); and the International Psycho-Analytical Library (see above)—all helped to move Woolf, and by association Bloomsbury itself, “to a more central position in intellectual and cultural life.”23 Along with inhabiting the sphere of publishing as a co-owner of the Hogarth Press, Woolf belonged to another professional circle, the world of small magazines and journals, through her friends and especially through her husband.24

In his role as the editor of the *Nation and Athenaeum* (N&A), Leonard solicited reviews from his friends and from his wife (see Chapman). Through Leonard, Woolf was able to participate, as a close observer, in the religious and polemical debates of their day (see Elizabeth Dickens’s essay in this collection). Woolf was also enmeshed in the world of literary gossip, as Katie Macnamara shows in her essay in this volume.

Even though Woolf was lauded as a writer in her time and was free to publish and promote her own works, she was, as Celia Marshik writes, “no more free to publish ‘indecency’ than any other woman writer” (869). Woolf faced the same laws and proscriptions faced by other writers, including the Obscene Publications Act (1857), the National Vigilance Association (1885), and the National Social Purity Crusade (1901) (Marshik 854; Whitworth, *Virginia* 89–91). These means of censorship formed the background against which Woolf was writing but did not affect her directly; unlike another prominent woman writer of her day, Radclyffe Hall, Woolf escaped external censors. In her career
as a professional writer Woolf did encounter more informal modes of
censorship, including reviewers themselves (Whitworth, Virginia 90;
Gordon 262); the buying public (see Neverow’s essay in this volume);
and increasing censorship in the marketplace of ideas (see McVicker’s
eyssay, also in this volume). Most of all, Woolf contended with internal-
ized censors, most famously the Angel in the House, who represented,
as Hermione Lee writes, “editorial pressures, an inhibiting sense of a
male tradition of essay-writing (her father’s tradition), and censored
self-consciousness as a woman writer” (“Virginia” 92).

For Woolf, ultimately, as Lyndall Gordon writes, “Truth cannot be
found on show in the literary marketplace” (262). Though a profes-
sional woman, Woolf sought a mental space away from the market-
place in which to do her work. Writing in anonymity for the first half
of her literary career provided Woolf with a space, as Anna Snaith
writes, “to develop a voice for the public press” (90). Other spaces
include Bloomsbury itself, which can be “seen as a protective, self-
perpetuating realm,…[preventing] Woolf from having to deal with
the public world” (Snaith 3) and the Hogarth Press, which “enabled
her largely to escape the demands of publicity, to perceive herself as
separate from the marketplace” (Garrity 197). Even when she was at the
height of her powers she fantasized, as Sean Latham writes, about the
“same sort of autonomy she imaginatively fashioned for Lily Briscoe,
feeling that her creativity could only be properly exercised in isolation
from the pressures of the literary marketplace” (90). Collier notes that
this desire to “imagine a private, decontextualized and dehistoricized
space of composition” (Modernism 71) is a recognizably modernist trope,
and he remarks that Woolf, more than her fellow modernists, vigor-
ously sought out this space.25

Yet, while Woolf may have yearned for a place separate from the
market, in practice she worked in the very heart of the literary market-
place. Remarkably her own writing space, while she lived in Tavistock
Square, was located in the center of a bustling business, the Hogarth
Press, “in what Leonard described as ‘the most frightful disorder—
even squalor,’ surrounded by . . . big brown paper bales of books.’”26 In
addition, she used her novels—her most imaginative works—as a stage
on which to dramatize her views about the literary marketplace, most
spectacularly in Orlando. Orlando, as Collier writes, is “a perpetually
aspiring writer” attempting “to navigate the institutions of a series of
historical literary marketplaces as a sort of Gulliver who repeatedly has
to learn anew each culture’s valuation of art, commerce, professional-
ism, and amateurism, all the while wavering personally between the
desire for privacy and the desire for publicity.” Indeed, the marketplace makes its appearance one way or another in most of Woolf’s writing. Critics such as Michael Tratner, Jed Esty, Jennifer Wicke, Kathryn Simpson, Reginald Abbott, Jeanette McVicker, Patrick Collier, Michael Whitworth, Pamela Caughie (Virginia), Anna Snaith, Elizabeth Outka, and Karen Leick (see her contribution to this volume) are among those who explore the various ways Woolf interweaves economics and commodification into her fiction.

It is in her essays that Woolf most fully addresses the literary marketplace; in them we see her express the scope of her feelings toward mass culture, especially as it takes the form of journalism. Possibly influenced from the earliest days of her career by her Aunt Caroline Stephen, Woolf “drew a distinction between reviewing and other kinds of literature” (L 1:212; qtd. in Brosnan 78) and maintained this perspective through the end of her life. While Woolf’s great professional mission was ensuring the survival of literature in the literary marketplace, her other major passion was the reader, and we see her constantly return to the concept of a reading public (Snaith 118) in her writing. Throughout the essays and articles published over her nearly forty-year career Woolf presented a range of attitudes, from a quest to educate a wide reading public to an identification with the common reader to an anxiety with a truly mass readership. She repeatedly voiced a desire for an unmediated relationship with the reader, and increasingly condemned the literary intermediaries—namely book reviewers, professionals, and the academy—that got in the way of that relationship.

Motivated by democratic principles of inclusion, Woolf sought to reach common readers, who, for her, are always amateurs. Reading “for his own pleasure” and “guided by an instinct to create for himself,” Woolf’s common reader is also “worse educated” than the critic or scholar (“Common Reader” 19). While the mass-market audience tends not to be included in her definition of the common reader, she did not join her fellow modernists, as Jane Garrity writes, “in a full-scale repudiation of mass culture” (195). For Woolf, the non-reading public, or “lowbrows,” men and women “of thoroughbred vitality who ride [their bodies] in pursuit of a living at a gallop across life” (“Middlebrow” 178), are driven too much by their physical needs to pursue the life of the mind, or to become common readers. Nonetheless, Woolf generally aspired toward reaching a broad cross-section of readers. Her essays are written specifically to appeal to a general reading audience; they are informative, witty, and conversational. As Beth Daugherty has noted, Woolf used her essays as a means to educate her
audience on reading and literature. Unlike her fellow modernist, T. S. Eliot, Woolf was more interested, as Michael Kaufmann writes, in enlightening than in mystifying the reader.

In her notion of a common reader, Woolf is also guided by her concern for the survival of the best in English literature. The common reader is an ideal, “the patron who will cajole the best out of the writer’s brain and bring to birth the most varied and vigorous progeny of which he is capable” (Woolf, “Patron” 212). Melba Cuddy-Keane describes how Woolf was writing at a time when serious literature seemed to be under threat (Virginia 62–63); the era of high modernism witnessed the flourishing of popular fiction, the categorization of periodicals and book series, and the growth of non-literary mass-market entertainment (McAleer 28–29). Not only, however, was literature under threat, but so, it seemed, was the practice of reading itself; Woolf’s many essays on reading were inspired by, and contributed to, “the public consciousness of her time” (Cuddy-Keane, Virginia 62).

For Woolf, reading, ideally, should be an unmediated and private exchange between the writer and reader, and she criticized whatever got in the way of this relationship—in particular, her own profession as a book reviewer. Over the course of her career literary journalism increasingly became, for Woolf, a “‘crime of criticism’” (qtd. in Lee, ‘‘Crime’’ 114). Literary journalists were little more than “grocers” who contaminated not only the reader-writer relationship, but also “the purity of the literary product” (Gualtieri 62). Woolf attributes the debased function and status of the literary journalist to the rapid expansion of the book market, the diversification of journals and newspapers, and the segmentation of the reading public, with its “unexampled and bewildering variety” (“Patron” 212–13). The literary market, to her, became a scene of anarchy (Collier, Modernism 73).

Not only was literary journalism expanding, but so was the literary profession. As the audience was becoming increasingly segmented, the types and levels of mediation multiplied as well (Collier, Modernism 91). Where modernists like Eliot saw professional societies as the answer to the perceived mayhem of the reviewing scene, Woolf saw professionals as part of the problem (Kaufmann 141). Professionals prevented readers from thinking on their own and undermined their confidence in their judgments. As a major form of professionalization, the institutionalization of literary study was, for Woolf, perhaps the most abhorrent of all. Institutionalization widened the gap between the reader and the writer, and increasingly moved serious study outside of the literary commons and into the walls of academia. The academics in Woolf’s
fiction (famously in *Jacob’s Room* 39–42) and non-fiction (memorably in *A Room of One’s Own* 31–32) are consumed by possessiveness, small-mindedness, and smugness (see also “Edmund Gosse” and “Walter Raleigh”). Though the strength of Woolf’s attacks against the figure of the professor can, perhaps, be explained in part by her having been denied a university education, she also associated them, and their medium, the lecture format, with oppressive masculinity, as she writes in *Three Guineas*: “at the very mention of culture the head aches, the eyes close, the doors shut, the air thickens; we are in a lecture room, rank with the fumes of stale print, listening to a gentleman who is forced to lecture or to write every Wednesday, every Sunday, about Milton or about Keats” (99).

For all that Woolf, then, sought to situate herself as anything but a professional critic, and for all that she felt ambivalently toward, eschewed, disdained, and criticized the literary marketplace and most vociferously professionalization, she remained engaged with it to the end of her life. She was not only an avid audience member for emerging new media such as the radio/wireless (Brosnan 164) but an active participant as well; for example, she delivered three radio broadcasts. In her broadcasts and in her critical essays Woolf attended to emerging trends in mass culture and communication. To cite one example: in her joint radio broadcast with Leonard, “Are Too Many Books Written & Published?,” she remarks on the way popular novelists of the day have moved on from “ordering their motor-cars and building their country houses” to selling “the film rights of some novel in the United States” (240). Melba Cuddy-Keane and Pamela Caughie are right to maintain that Woolf and other modernist intellectuals were aware of the implications of the popular media of their day (Cuddy-Keane, Introduction 237; Caughie, Introduction xx). In addition, as a member of Bloomsbury, Woolf was part of “arguably the first aesthetic movement to be subject to the now familiar phenomenon of media hype” (Whitehead qtd. in Brosnan 164).

Critics are now considering the many ways that Woolf and Bloomsbury are being hyped and commodified (Griffiths; see also Falcetta’s essay in this collection), a process that began in her lifetime with the Hogarth Press Uniform edition. Putting “a living novelist’s works into standard edition,” as Willis notes, “is to make a claim for the permanence and importance of the writer’s work, to establish a canon, to suggest the classic” (156). In the decades following her death, Leonard helped to keep Virginia Woolf in the eye of primarily the literary establishment; from 1942 to 1958 he published eight posthumous collections of her
writing every two or three years. Since the 1960s, as Brenda Silver writes in *Virginia Woolf Icon*, Woolf has achieved iconic status—or statuses. In today’s marketplace, Virginia Woolf appears in many “versions,” unfixed representations whose variable meanings alter from one context to the next, and lend themselves to multiple and unstable interpretations (Silver 13). Woolf’s “elevation to canonical superstar,” “‘the Marilyn Monroe of American academia’” (xvi, 239), is only one of these versions; as icon, Virginia Woolf has become a shape-shifter who can flow across many borders, including those that supposedly mark the distinction between academia and mass culture. Silver’s study describes the many ways Woolf has “achieved star billing” even in the world of popular culture (xvi). Part of what makes the study of Woolf so compelling and rich is her ability to transgress these borders within her own lifetime; she was a high literary modernist always attuned to the wide world around her, including the arena of buying and selling, trade and commerce.

* * *

The essays in this collection consider the many versions of Woolf in, her complex attitudes to, and her relationships with a variety of marketplaces. *Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace* is divided into four sections: (1) Woolf’s Engagement with the Marketplace, (2) Woolf’s Relationship to the Marketplace, (3) Woolf’s Marketplaces, and (4) Marketing Woolf. “Woolf’s Engagement with the Marketplace” considers Woolf’s specific forms of involvement with the marketplace, starting with her apprenticeship as a reviewer, moving onto the way Leonard also sought to generate sales in his role as the literary editor of the N&A, to, finally, the strategies she developed to deal with the market as a patriarchal place that would censor her feminism. The second section, “Woolf’s Relationship to the Marketplace,” focuses on her role as a highbrow writer and, in that role, her ambivalence toward the marketplace. On the one hand, she sought to position herself as separate from it even as she sought to define herself in relation to it; on the other, she acknowledged her role as that of a player in the market and indeed embraced it, to some extent, as well. The essays in the third section, “Woolf’s Marketplaces,” consider one of the places in which she published, the venue of the periodical, and popular forms in the literary marketplace, namely the familiar essay. The last essay in this section, on the metropolitan market, addresses Woolf’s awareness of herself as a writer in the global market. The fourth section, “Marketing
Woolf,” continues this international theme. Three of the essays address how Woolf was herself marketed internationally during her lifetime, and the last essay takes us to the present in its treatment of how Woolf is advertised through her book covers.

The first section starts with Beth Daugherty’s “Reading, Taking Notes, and Writing: Virginia Stephen’s Reviewing Practice.” Virginia Woolf, then Virginia Stephen, started her career as a literary journalist—more specifically, as a reviewer. Stephen had neither formal education nor training for this role. Along with considering the writing manuals that the young Stephen could have consulted, but in all likelihood did not, Daugherty describes the way she diligently and resourcefully taught herself the art of writing for newspapers, or how to enter the literary marketplace.

Like his wife, Leonard Woolf had sales on his mind, even in his role as the literary editor of the N&A. Elizabeth Dickens’s essay “Circulating Ideas and Selling Periodicals: Leonard Woolf, the Nation and Athenaeum, and Topical Debate” shows how Leonard sought to increase circulation by the means of polemics. “Circulating Ideas” is a case study of the 1926 discussion in the N&A about religious belief, a debate ignited by Leonard’s review of two books, one endorsing rationalism/atheism and the other promoting Christianity. This debate not only enjoined readers to participate actively in the literary marketplace by way of writing letters and completing a questionnaire, but it reveals interesting information about the putative audience of the N&A.

Vara Neverow’s “Woolf’s Editorial Self-Censorship and Risk-Taking in Jacob’s Room” is also a kind of case study. Focusing primarily on Jacob’s Room as an example of how Woolf was cautious about what she published, Neverow explains how she tailored her writing, and devised her marketplace strategies, for at least three different readerships, with the first a mixed-gender public, the second primarily women, and the third family and friends. In Jacob’s Room Woolf carefully inserted outsider jokes and references recognizable only by her intimate circle, and at the same time was able to convey her meaning to a general public through a variation of her “tea-table training” (MB 148).

In “Between Writing and Truth: Woolf’s Positive Nihilism” Jeanette McVicker also considers Woolf’s relationship to her patriarchal, capitalist censors, especially as she sought to tell the truth in the cultural marketplace. Focusing on Woolf’s works of the 1930s and early 1940s, McVicker examines the way Woolf returned repeatedly to Greek philosophy and tragedy in her lifelong efforts to represent the truth of reality, above all the material reality of women’s lives. Working in a
marketplace increasingly regulated by British censors, Woolf turned to the practice of “positive nihilism” in her reconsideration of art, truth, and gender. Positive nihilism is the ability to persevere under the most oppressive of conditions even as one acknowledges the seeming futility of imagining change. Through literature, Woolf could speak to a future even as she witnessed the overall meaninglessness of human existence and its violence.

By the 1930s, Woolf spoke from the position of an established if uncomfortably self-defined highbrow (“Middlebrow” 186). Focusing primarily on the 1920s, the three essays in the next section, “Woolf’s Relationship to the Marketplace,” consider Woolf’s relationship with the marketplace in terms of her quest for literary status. In “How to Strike a Contemporary: Woolf, Mansfield, and Marketing Gossip” Katie Macnamara explores the friendship and rivalry between Woolf and Katherine Mansfield as an illustration of how writers try to gain or maintain a foothold in a competitive literary-intellectual marketplace. Just as Woolf, in her essays and fiction, practiced a form of gossip as a way to grasp the nature and complexities of the literary marketplace, so should readers of Woolf’s own writing emulate her in an effort to understand the production of literary reputation.

Woolf used her growing status to promote that of another writer, Emily Brontë, as Heather Bean explains in “Something of a Firebrand: Virginia Woolf and the Literary Reputation of Emily Brontë.” Ever since their deaths the writings of the Brontë sisters have generated a marketplace of their own, and in 1904 Woolf entered the arena of Brontëana with her essay on a literary pilgrimage to Haworth. By 1925, with the publication of The Common Reader, Woolf’s interest had shifted from Charlotte, the primary figure of interest in the essay of more than two decades ago, to Emily, whose literary value was beginning to emerge from the condemnatory shadows cast on her by the nineteenth century. Through her career Woolf revised and enhanced Emily Brontë’s status as a way of voicing her own views on the reputation of other women writers in the marketplace. In effect, Woolf deployed her own cultural capital to further Emily Brontë’s.

Yet Woolf was uneasy about her own growing reputation in the marketplace, as Karen Leick demonstrates in “Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein: Commerce, Bestsellers, and the Jew.” Woolf met Stein on at least one occasion, a meeting that prompted a reaction of scorn. Leick contends that Woolf’s hostility is based on both Stein’s Jewish identity and her claim to be the most popular writer alive. Throughout her career Woolf associated Jewishness with writing for money which,
for her, translated into intellectual prostitution. However, Woolf was also interested in attracting a large audience, and Leick has found that her most pronounced anti-Semitism appears in works—“The Duchess and the Jeweller,” *Flush*, and *The Years*—that appealed to the mainstream public and consequently were potential moneymakers.

The third section considers the various forms of Woolf’s engagement with the marketplace. In “Woolf’s Marketplaces” the four contributors examine how Woolf is marketed in genres such as the familiar essay, publication venues such as periodicals, and spheres such as the metropolitan marketplace. Caroline Pollentier examines Woolf’s participation in the marketplace of the popular essay in “Virginia Woolf and the Middlebrow Market of the Familiar Essay.” Focusing on Woolf’s occasional, non-review, “middlebrow” essays, Pollentier places them in the context of those by her fellow contemporary essayists like Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. She traces Woolf’s attack on “middlebrowism” to her earlier criticism of modern familiar essays, and explains how, in her writing, Woolf used the “logic of distinction,” or the means of distinguishing her own practice from that of the popular essayists of her day. Emphasizing Woolf’s pronounced stance as a highbrow writer, in contrast to the majority of familiar essayists, who proudly proclaimed their middlebrow status, Pollentier concludes that they all nonetheless made use of the potential of the familiar essay to create a sense of community.

In “Woolf Studies and Periodical Studies” Patrick Collier argues that after all these years of studying Woolf’s writing, the time has come to study the places where her writing first appeared, particularly the periodical. Collier asks critics to move into a new field of inquiry, periodical studies (see also his *Woolf and Periodicals*). Like any other media, he observes, periodicals are not neutral containers; they are themselves objects of study. Melissa Sullivan’s “The ‘Keystone Public’ and Virginia Woolf: A Room of One’s Own, *Time and Tide*, and Cultural Hierarchies” is an example of a study that does address what it means to publish in the venue of a periodical. Though Woolf knew that she would risk her cultural capital as a highbrow writer by publishing in *Time and Tide*, Sullivan writes, she chose to align herself with middlebrow women writers in defiance of the cultural hierarchies that marginalized all women writers. Sullivan describes the way publications such as *Time and Tide* became one of the contested spaces where the “battle of the brows” was fought, and an examination of Woolf’s choice to publish there shows how fluid the boundaries between the brows (especially the middle and high) were.
In the final essay in this section, “‘Murdering an Aunt or Two’: Textual Practice and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf’s Metropolitan Market,” John K. Young considers Woolf in the context of the global marketplace. He starts by looking at the way Woolf, ever immersed in the details of textual production and attentive to the relationship between the aesthetic and commercial spheres, represents the literary marketplace in *A Room of One’s Own*. Instead of featuring her own Hogarth Press as the source of the narrator’s £500 a year, Woolf attributes the inheritance to an aunt who died from falling off a horse in Bombay, and thus reveals her own implication in an imperialist system. The absent representation of the Hogarth Press, and the insertion of the dead aunt in its place, exposes the imperialist marketplace in which London was located, and reveals that British readers, Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and India, were all part of an intricate and multifaceted system.

While John K. Young’s essay looks at the way Woolf acknowledges her own implication in the international marketplace, the essays in the fourth part in the anthology, “Marketing Woolf,” consider the commodification of Woolf in the international marketplace. In “The ‘Grand Lady of Literature’: Virginia Woolf in Italy under Fascism,” Elisa Bolchi describes the vital role that the Italian critical establishment played in introducing Woolf to the Italian reading public. Even under Fascism, publishers and translators, reviewers and critics, and the periodicals in which they published thrived during the first few decades of twentieth-century Italy. Along with providing the context of Woolf’s publication history in Italy, Bolchi shows how the initial reception and discussion of Woolf’s novels in 1920s Italian periodicals established a literary marketplace for her, preparing readers for her works when they were published in their entirety. Woolf was welcomed by Italian editors and critics as a “grand lady of literature.”

Sara Villa’s “Translating *Orlando* in 1930s Fascist Italy: Virginia Woolf, Arnoldo Mondadori, and Alessandra Scalero” complements Bolchi’s “‘Grand Lady of Literature.’” While Bolchi’s essay focuses on the way periodicals prepared the public for Woolf’s novels—at least twelve articles on Woolf had appeared in Italy before the publication of *Orlando*—Villa’s homes in on the first full Italian translation of Woolf’s novels and the key role played by Alessandra Scalero. In October 1933 the distinguished publisher Mondadori chose *Orlando* as the first novel to introduce Woolf to Italian readers. Villa explores the reasons for this selection: among others, Mondadori wanted to expand its publication list, and the novel had already proven successful when it appeared in
Britain. Though censorship was strong, it had not yet reached the levels that it would by the close of the decade; hence it was still possible to publish a work as unconventional and radical as *Orlando*. Villa explains how the experienced translator Alessandra Scalero was able to turn *Orlando* into a text that could slip by censors who would have objected to the ways Woolf challenged patriarchal conventions. Even as Scalero was adept at translating Woolf in a marketplace informed by Fascism, her translations, argue Villa, are still among the best Italian ones there are, and in effect continue to contribute to the present-day marketing of Woolf.

In “Appropriating Virginia Woolf for the New Humanism: Seward Collins and *The Bookman*, 1927–1933,” Yuzu Uchida examines the way Woolf’s essays were transformed in another international marketplace, the United States. Starting in 1929, Woolf’s name and essays appeared at least ninety-four times during the era of Seward Collins’s editorship (and ownership) of the American publication *The Bookman*. Collins was a strong supporter of the New Humanism, a school of thought established in the late nineteenth century and debated among literary journals in the late 1920s and into the 1930s. New Humanists believed in universal and immutable ideals. As a modernist who questioned the very idea of an immutable ideal, Woolf would have been opposed to the New Humanism. However, unlike Alessandra Scalero, who sought to remain as true as possible to the spirit and intention of Woolf’s texts, Collins intentionally manipulated Woolf’s writing as a way to propagate this ideology. Uchida looks at the way Collins treated Woolf’s texts in problematic ways, often reprinting and quoting them in contexts at variance to those of the original. Oddly, Woolf seems to have been unconcerned about this misappropriation; there is no evidence that she addressed it in her letters or diaries. Uchida’s essay is an interesting instance of how Woolf did not always seek to manage the versions of her publications as they appeared in the marketplace.

Finally, Jennie-Rebecca Falcetta’s “Don’t Judge a Cover by Its Woolf: Book Cover Images and the Marketing of Virginia Woolf’s Work” takes us into the present day. Falcetta traces the ways Woolf has been marketed in the paperback book covers in the past sixty years, from the Penguin series to more recent scholarly editions. She examines the book jackets of *Mrs. Dalloway*, *A Room of One’s Own*, and *The Waves*, a group representing, respectively, Woolf’s command of the modes of novelistic characterization, non-fiction essay, and highly experimental prose fiction. Falcetta’s larger point is that while book covers are designed primarily to draw attention and inspire sales, they
are not unchanging entities, but are rather responsive to the values, practices, and aesthetics of the cultures in which they are produced. Along with the other essays in this final section, “Don’t Judge a Cover by Its Woolf” provides an occasion for us readers and critics to consider our own activities and the role we continue to play in marketing Woolf to this and to future generations.

The contributors to *Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace* explore the many ways Woolf was a part of the marketplace of buying and selling, ideas and ideologies, then and now, and how very aware she was of her role in this sphere and of its ethos. At the beginning of her literary career she wrote, “if you have a monster like the British public to feed, you will try to tickle its stale palate in new ways; fresh and amusing shapes must be given to the old commodities” (“Decay” 25). These essays will inspire further investigation into the ways Woolf engaged, in very material and practical ways, with the public and its palate, and in the world of commodity culture.

---

**Notes**

2. See Delany 13; Whitworth 76; and Jordan and Patten 3.
3. See Dettmar and Watt; Rainey; Collier; Mao and Walkowitz; Elliott and Wallace; Willison et al.; Morrison; Wexler; Jensen; and Sage, among others.
4. 64; see also Simpson 1; Garrity 198; and Laing 69, 70, 73.
5. Mass culture in its several forms, including children’s writing and romantic fiction (Trodd 29), offered women greater opportunities for employment.
6. See also Brosnan 19; Staveley; and Elliott and Wallace 75–76.
7. See also L. Woolf, *Downhill* 62–63, where he writes about the way Woolf needed journalism to express the side of her that she could not in her fiction.
8. See also L. Woolf, *Downhill* 149, 156–57; and Brosnan 80.
9. For other meanings that money held for Woolf, see Garrity 197 and Simpson 1.
10. See Daugherty, “Virginia”; Dubino; Gualtieri; Mepham; and Brosnan 40–48, all of whom describe the early trajectory of Woolf’s literary career.
12. For more background on these and other publications, see McNeillie; and Brosnan 58–68.
13. As she famously wrote in *Room*, “Money dignifies what is frivolous if unpaid for” (68).
14. See Latham 92, Marcus 142, and Willis 133–34 for Woolf’s discomfort with her growing fame and success.
15. For further discussion on Woolf’s proficiency as a publisher, see Porter 298–85, 295; Marcus 132, 143; Kennedy 143, 80; L. Woolf, *Downhill* 173; Snaith 45; Plomer 106; and Willis.
16. L. Woolf, *Downhill* 66, 77–78, 171. For the Woolfs’ “emotional attitude towards the Press” (Lehmann 37), see Lehmann; and Willis 60, 64, 66.
17. 366; see also 378; and L. Woolf, *Downhill* 78.
18. For more on the significance of the Hogarth’s publications of Russian translations, see Willis 33, 50, 80–87, 101–03; and L. Woolf, *Downhill* 67, 77.

19. For the way Hogarth “can claim an important role in the dissemination of Freud’s ideas” (Willis 297), see Porter 284; and Willis 108, 319, Chapter 8.

20. Referencing Bourdieu, Bishop describes the way modernists like the Woolfs, who appeared to be “aggressively non-commercial,” in fact became “consecrator[s] of culture” by appearing not to be doing precisely what they were doing (53, 62).

21. *Downhill* 171; see also L. Woolf, *Journey* 110–16; and Willis 64.

22. For more on this part of Woolf’s role as a publisher, see Plomer 106; Porter 283, 285; and Willis 68, 295.

23. Marcus 129. For more on this aspect of the Hogarth Press, see Willis 69, 109, 200–03; Whitworth 93; and *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and the Networks of Modernism*, edited by Helen Southworth (forthcoming).

24. For the connection between Hogarth and Leonard’s profession as an editor, see L. Woolf, *Downhill* 130, 132; and Willis 230, 379. For the at times controversial way the members of Bloomsbury promoted and reviewed each other’s works, see Lee, “‘ Crimes ’” 118–20; and Collier, *Modernism* 83–87.

25. For more on Woolf’s longing for a space separate from the marketplace, see also Latham 59, 94, 96, 114–15; and Collier, *Modernism* 103, 204.

26. Lee, *Virginia* 560. See also Trodd 45; and Kennedy, whose sketches of the time he spent as an assistant at Hogarth feature her at work, in the basement where the Press was located, with a swarm of activity buzzing about her.

27. “Virginia” 364; for more on the representation of the literary marketplace in *Orlando*, see also Whitworth “Logan.”

28. When Woolf did critique the marketplace, as Leslie Hankins argues, she directed her attack not against the general public but rather “capitalist power brokers, embodied as ‘Bond Street tailors’” (24).

29. See Snaith, who cites the responses that Woolf received for *Three Guineas* as evidence of the way she inspired a wide cross-section of readers (124), and Staveley, who problematizes this reading.

30. See also Altick on the mass reading public.

31. See also 154–56, 212; Bishop 51, 58–59; and Silver 302.

**Works Cited**


Bingham, Adrian. Rev. of *Modernism on Fleet Street*, by Patrick Collier. H-Net List for British and Irish History 20 February 2008. E-mail listserv.


“Christopher Isherwood.” *Noble* 175–79.


Daugherty, Beth. “‘Readin’, Writing’, and ‘Revisin’: Virginia Woolf’s ‘How Should One Read a Book?’” Rosenberg and Dubino 159–76.


Jeanne Dubino


Introduction


PART I

Woolf’s Engagement with the Marketplace
When Virginia Woolf published her 1939 essay “Reviewing,” it provoked immediate disagreement. Leonard Woolf questioned her argument in a note appended to the Hogarth Sixpenny Pamphlet (#4) and included himself on the cover and title page. W. Denham Sutcliffe, writing a dissertation on book reviewing at Oxford, wrote to point out that the roots of modern reviewing lay in the early eighteenth century essayists who had combined criticism with publicity in their attempt to “guide the public taste” (Daugherty, “You” 173). Recent critics have noted the essay’s portrayal of a writer exposed, its class implications, its tensions between journalism and criticism, and its ambiguity about the reviewer’s role (Brosnan 70–76, 120–21; Bowlby 150–54; Collier, Modernism 73–79). These persuasive interpretations, however, overlook the educational nature of what Woolf calls for. Valuing the dialogue between reviewer and author that grows out of an author’s genuine desire “to be told why [the reviewer] likes or dislikes his work” and a reviewer’s genuine desire “to tell them why I either like or dislike their work” (211–12), Woolf calls for a private meeting between “doctor and writer”: “for an hour they would consult about the book in question. They would talk, seriously and privately” (212). The writer wants to have “the opinion of an impersonal and disinterested critic” outside the glare of publicity and market concerns (213).

Woolf’s proposal reflects not only the unease about commercial journalism many writers shared at the time, but also a gap in Virginia
Stephen’s apprenticeship. Woolf’s call for a private discussion with a disinterested reader reveals what Stephen needed in 1904: instruction, attention, and the benefit of “coming into touch with a well-stored mind, housing other books and even other literatures, and thus other standards” (212). What she asks for, in fact, Vanessa Stephen had at the Cope School of Art or Royal Academy, where Vanessa had her own work viewed and commented upon by instructors and other students and could view and comment on theirs. Woolf’s request bears a striking resemblance not only to Vanessa’s education, but also to the workshop and conference method practiced in many creative writing programs today. In 1939, Woolf pleads for what novice writers who can afford higher education now routinely have, a formalized apprenticeship that includes consultations with readers who focus on the work itself, comment on the writing without regard for reputation or commerce, and diagnose and suggest. But nothing parallel to such an apprenticeship was available to young writers in the early twentieth century and certainly not to Virginia Stephen. As she writes to Madge Vaughan in 1906, “I have had so very little criticism upon my work that I really don’t know what kind of impression I make” (L 1: 227).

How did the young woman learn her craft? As Peter Keating notes, the birth of The Society of Authors and literary agency in the late nineteenth century meant that “literary advice had become a marketable commodity,” and instructional books became available in increasing numbers (71). Barbara Onslow suggests that by the end of the nineteenth century, aspiring journalists were “overwhelmed with advice” (86). But the quality and usefulness of the advice in books such as Percy Russell’s The Author’s Manual, John Oldcastle’s Journals and Journalism: With a Guide for Literary Beginners, and Eustace H. Miles’s How to Prepare Essays, Lectures, Articles, Books, Speeches and Letters was questionable, much of it “little more than belletristic chat” (Keating 71). Stephen could have consulted Arnold Bennett’s Journalism and Women, but it does not cover book reviewing and cautions women to avoid their reputation for unreliability, inattention to detail, and lack of restraint, traits he blames on lack of training, not biology (9–20). Or she might have consulted his How to Become an Author, but in it, he discusses only freelance contributions, not book reviews. Both books are subtitled A Practical Guide, and they are more about breaking into the market, earning a living at writing, and preparing manuscripts than about how-to or craft. Even Bennett’s chapters on style focus more on spelling and grammar than on larger matters.

It is doubtful, however, that Virginia Stephen consulted any of these manuals, given her view of Adam Lorimer’s The Author’s Progress: his
guide is “the ugliest form of ‘shop’ expounded,” and it focuses only on what “make[s] a book successful independently of the book itself” (*E* 1: 117). She confesses to Nelly Cecil that “it is a most depressing and ugly book, and treats Literature like a trade” (*L* 1: 176). Her opinion may have been colored by the assumptions Keating says quickly grew up around advice manuals—only failed authors would write such manuals and only people beyond help would buy one (71–72)—but she does not seem to be against helping people learn how to write. Rather, it *is* a depressing book, and not just because “the confusion between art and trade must always be ugly . . . and . . . inevitable” (*E* 1: 117), but because of its arch tone and cynicism, especially about readers:

Henceforward it is to be feared the Writer who writes because he has thought profoundly, or had visions which seem to him inspirations, will be heard of no more. There is no Publisher for him; a little longer and there will be no Magazine for him. There never was much of a Public for him, and it seems there will be less of such a Public as we progress farther into the halfpenny newspaper age. (272)⁸

If Stephen did not consult manuals, however, she did use literary models, writing in her journal, “Out to Hatchards to buy Stevenson & Pater—I want to study them—not to copy, I hope, but to see how the trick’s done” (*PA* 251).

She might have picked up guidance from her other reading as well—her “youthful training” on the *Hyde Park Gate News* (Brosnan 23) reveals she was imitating journalistic style at age nine (*Bell* 1: 28). Leslie and Julia Stephen probably subscribed to at least the *Cornhill* and *Nineteenth Century* (Gillespie 198), and one can imagine Virginia Stephen reading reviews there and in newspapers, where, as Philip Waller notes, reviews were popular and frequent (117). Leslie continued to write biographical/review essays for the *National Review* up through 1902, and his daughter may have read those and earlier pieces, although as Jeanne Dubino comments, her father did not actively provide her with specific practical or instructional assistance (27).⁹

Her letters and journal indicate she occasionally shared her work with friends. For example, she sometimes received comments before revising, as from Violet Dickinson about, probably, her piece on Haworth (*L* 1: 160) and “Street Music” (*PA* 232) or from Kitty Maxse, Violet Dickinson, and Nelly Cecil about the Note on her father for Fred Maitland (*PA* 230; *L* 1: 176, 177) or from Madge Vaughan (*L* 1: 226–27).
Other times she received or solicited comments after something was in print, as from Nelly Cecil, probably about her review of Howells (L 1: 167) or from Violet Dickinson about “Literary Geography” (L 1: 182) and her review of Henry James (L 1: 234). She also discussed reviewing with a Morley College student, Miss Williams, and the “Gutter and Stamp system” sarcastically proposed in “Reviewing,” in which the “gutter” “will write out a short statement of the book; extract the plot . . . ; quote a few anecdotes” and the “taster” will stamp it with “an asterisk to signify approval, a dagger to signify disapproval” (209), may have had its roots in that conversation. In her “Report on Teaching at Morley College,” Stephen comments that Miss Williams was “a writing machine to be set in motion by the editor,” someone who rapidly turned pages “with a keen eye” for “quotations picked up at random” that “need only be linked together by a connecting word,” all pulled together in a favorable or unfavorable notice that had nothing to do with the author (202).¹⁰

Suggestions she received from friends must not have been helpful, however, because Virginia Stephen quickly “determine[d] to invite no more [criticism from them] than is absolutely necessary. I shall send things straight to the editors, whose criticism is important” (PA 232). Violet Dickinson and Kitty Maxse were not professional writers, and Lady Robert Cecil, with whom she alternated book reviews for Cornhill Magazine, did not become a nonfiction mentor. Virginia Stephen, then, did not learn the reviewing craft with others, reading other young reviewers’ work in draft stages, or receiving comments from other writers or an instructor. But she did learn from editors. From them, she learned specific skills, the “knack of writing for newspapers” (L 1: 155), and the ability to adapt to various audiences. Having to imagine, respond to, and write for the “Governess, and maiden lady, and high church Parson mixed” who was reading the Anglo-Catholic and “pretty dull” Guardian (McNeillie xii), the right wing and anti-German imperialists interested in politics in the National Review, the reform liberals reading the lively Academy & Literature, the anti-imperialistic liberals keeping up with literature and politics in the Speaker, the more literary types reading the old-fashioned Cornhill, the even more left-wing readers of the Nation, and the large numbers reading the fairly new Times Literary Supplement (TLS) gave Virginia Stephen practice in thinking about wider audiences, the varied nature of any audience, and common readers. As with much of her education, however, she did this learning on the job and on her own.
Like most novices, Virginia Stephen craved approval ("Do you feel
convinced I can write?" [L 1: 202]) and money ("I don’t in the least
want Mrs L’s candid criticism; I want her cheque!" [L 1: 154]), but she
also admits that Mrs. Lyttelton’s “criticisms however stringent will be
worth attending to” (L 1: 155). Perhaps, then, visits from the Guardian’s
Supplement editor in mid-December 1904 and January 1905, soon after
Stephen’s first efforts were published there, contributed to the great
strides she made between her second and sixth reviews. Her review of
The Son of Royal Langbrith has all the marks of a novice: one long para-
graph, three-fourths of it plot summary; three sentences in a row with
the verb “is”; a vague “this”; unclear referents; and even a “needless
to say” (E 1: 3–5).11 But in her review of The Feminine Note in Fiction,
she evaluates from the start, noting that W. L. Courtney has made a
“laborious” attempt to define the feminine note in fiction; ends where
he begins; and provides detailed plot outlines she would have gladly
foregone

in exchange for some definite verdict; we can all read Mrs
Humphry Ward, for instance, and remember her story, but we
want a critic to separate her virtues and her failings, to assign her
right place in literature and to decide which of her characteristics
are essentially feminine and why, and what is their significance.
(E 1: 15)

Stephen thus confidently goes beyond the book’s content to define
what readers want from critics.

Certainly Stephen learns about meeting length requirements from
Mrs. Lyttelton.12 She is angry when her editor tells her to cut from a
third to a half of her review of Henry James’s The Golden Bowl, writing
to Violet, “It was quite good before the official eye fell upon it; now it
is worthless, and doesn’t in the least represent all the toil I put into it”
(L 1: 178). In her journal, she blames having to cut it on “the worthy
Patronesses” who “want to read about midwives” (PA 237). Indeed, the
Association for Promoting Training and Supply of Midwives reports
its annual meeting on the page opposite her review (Guardian 338)!
But she neglects to mention that her assignment, also written down
in her journal, was to boil 550 pages of “Henry James print” into “7
or 800 words” (PA 234–35), the exact length of the published review,
the result of her “cut[ting] two sheets to pieces, [writing] a scrawl to
mend them together, and... sen[ding] the maimed thing off” (L 1: 178).
What she “forgets” in her diary and a letter, though, she learns in her
professional life. As she confides about a later review, “I hadn’t much
difficulty…—not that I overflowed my limit. I shan’t waste words
again!” (PA 251). Noting in her 1905 journal that a typewritten foolscap
sheet has approximately 450 words (PA 277), she was conscious of
word count averages from then on, often jotting down estimates and
predictions on fiction and nonfiction drafts alike.

Although Virginia Stephen learned from all the editors and publica-
tions she wrote for during her apprenticeship (Daugherty “Virginia
Stephen”), she probably received the most direct instruction from Bruce
Richmond at the TLS. At the TLS, Virginia Stephen had steady work
and time to improve. From Richmond, she learned what Eliot called
“the discipline of anonymity” (17), and according to her 1938 self, “a
lot of my craft…; how to compress; how to enliven; & also…to read
with a pen & notebook, seriously” (D 5: 145). If the reading notes for
her early reviews housed in the Monks House Papers at the University
of Sussex are in fact the first such notes she made (it is possible earlier
notes did not survive), then they support her later comment. Only two
of the eight reviews she published before her association with the TLS
began have notes, whereas after starting with TLS, forty-two of the
forty-seven 1905–1906 reviews have notes.13

Because some books she reviewed can still be found, because we
have the early reviews, and because we have some reading notes, it is
possible to watch Virginia Stephen learn her reviewing craft. With one
caveat. We do not have reading notes for all her early reviews and we
do not have the steps between notes and publication—drafts, revisions,
or typescripts (if there were any)—so any tracing must be partial. But a
representative sample of Virginia Stephen’s early work illustrates some-
thing of her process: three reviews from 1905 and two from early 1906,
published in three different venues, the Guardian, the Speaker, and TLS.
Henry James’s The Golden Bowl and Edith Wharton’s House of Mirth are
canonical texts, whereas Beatrice Harraden’s The Scholar’s Daughter
and Canon Alfred Ainger’s Lectures and Essays are not, and Ada Sterling’s A
Belle of the Fifties: Memoirs of Mrs. Clay of Alabama is non-literary.14 The
reading notes for Belle of the Fifties, The Golden Bowl, and the Lectures and
Essays are extensive, whereas the notes for the Harraden and Wharton
novels are brief.15 The reviews of Wharton and James and Sterling are
positive, while the reviews of Harraden and Ainger are negative. These
reviews also touch tangentially on some of Woolf’s later interests as
an essayist—Beatrice Harraden was a feminist who supported the suf-
fragette cause, Alfred Ainger wrote about literature, and Ada Sterling
wrote a memoir of a woman living through a war—and strategies as a
Reading, Taking Notes, and Writing

novelist—Edith Wharton and Henry James could be considered a literary aunt and uncle.

Virginia Stephen’s reading notes would not seem unusual to anyone who writes book reviews. Not following the practice of her father, who wrote in his books, she uses a notebook; notes the date, publication venue, and title and author of book at the top of a new page; and keeps a tally of chapter and/or page numbers down the left hand side with generally short descriptive phrases or quotations and paraphrases to the right of the page numbers. She depends on this raw material, frequently using quotations from her notes in her reviews, thus taking a straightforward approach to her neutral notes. But she also occasionally comments on the book, noting, for example, that Ainger “almost always begins by saying that he has nothing new to tell” and “won’t say anything decided ‘probable’ ‘likely enough’” (VS notes 113, 111). The notes reveal what she notices and first impressions. In Stephen’s reading notes for these five reviews, for example, she makes no comments about Belle of the Fifties but becomes comfortable commenting on Henry James as she gets further into the novel; for the other books, her ratio of comments to description ranges from one in ten to one in three. Understandably, Stephen comments the least on Mrs. Clay’s memories of the Civil War era—she knows little about United States history and even takes notes on the 1850s from the Cambridge Modern History of the United States. Only when she tries to fit the United States into her own frame of reference, calling Washington society “a kind of democratic Court” (VS notes 2), does she interpret at all. In the review, she makes the same move, turning Mrs. Clay into “an American version of our European ‘great lady’” (E 1: 17).

Studies of Woolf’s writing and revising practice often focus on her cuts and a resulting loss of critique, but Virginia Stephen’s movement from notes to reviews during her apprenticeship reflects a more complex process. For example, Stephen’s notes for Belle of the Fifties contain details of wartime deprivations—scarce food, leather cut off furniture to make shoes, coffee made from potatoes, wallpaper used for writing paper (VW notes 6–7)—but in her review, Stephen emphasizes the gaiety of a certain class’s pre-war social life. That decision reflects a general shift from her notes’ neutrality to her review’s muted evaluation: the focus on fashion, gossip, and parties implies a critique. Stephen does not use Mrs. Clay’s belief that slavery is a benefit because it “civilizes the slave” in her review (VS notes 7); she makes clear it’s “according to Mrs. Clay” that slaves had lives of “idyllic peace and prosperity” (E 1: 20); and she calls the Southern woman’s use of “insolent” for
emancipated Negroes the “conclusion of the deposed aristocrat” (E 1: 20). Although Stephen’s notes simply record Mrs. Clay’s descriptions and perceptions, her review makes clear that the belle’s enthusiasm for the Southern cause means the reader cannot “weigh the questions which separated the two sides” (E 1: 20).17

The negative reactions Virginia Stephen has to Henry James’s novel in her reading notes appear in her basically positive review, including an analogy between James and the artist who, because he knows anatomy, “paints every bone and muscle in the human frame” (E 1: 23). Her impatience in the notes—“two chapters of solid explanation always follows on any conversation or action” (Golden 385)—shows up in the review when she notes the book’s length three times and writes “we suffer from a surfeit of words” (E 1: 22–23). She was not afraid to call James “vague and difficult” in her notes (“Golden” 386) or say he lacked genius in her review (E 1: 23–24). When Stephen changes notes about Edith Wharton’s novel being “too long and minute” (VS notes 69) into a review comment that the writer has “spared no pains to make her delineation exact” (E 1: 67–68), she states her criticism positively. But the reader knows what to expect.

In her review of Ainger, Virginia Stephen begins to draw the line between the nineteenth- and twentieth-century views of things that Virginia Woolf would later emphasize, and she carves out what not to do in essays. But the young reviewer does not use her notes about Ainger’s claim to have no special knowledge or his attempt to write criticism from the average reader’s perspective (VS notes 108). She notes his “definition of criticism” (VS notes 119), but does not copy this passage from the same page: “When we read we lose much by not standing side by side with the writer. . . . To understand some writers we must change our planet and wait patiently till we are acclimatized” (Ainger II: 331). But these ideas reappear later when Woolf positions herself as an amateur (CR 1: 1–2) and articulates her view that readers should read first as fellow-workers in “How Should One Read a Book?” (CR 2: 259, 267).

In her notes for Harraden’s The Scholar’s Daughter, Stephen seems unaware of a connection between her life and Harraden’s motherless Geraldine, whose father is engaged in dictionary making. But her review acknowledges that “[t]he picture of a girl, young, beautiful, and gifted, brought up solely among learned scholars who are preparing a colossal dictionary of the English language attracts attention at the outset” (E 1: 92). Although Stephen’s review of Harraden’s novel is critical—“if we consider the book as a serious novel its superficiality irritates us, or
if we take it as a short story we are wearied by the protracted explanations” (E 1: 92)—her notes are more direct: “theres no one to care for after 10 minutes absurdly unreal. She has not realized her characters. Obvious Emotions a very weak novel” (VS notes 135–36). Stephen softens that criticism in her review, suggesting that “Miss Harraden might have concentrated her powers upon the sufficiently amusing intricacies of the plot and turned out a well-filled short story, or, had she chosen to expound the characters more elaborately, she might have given us an interesting study of the conflict of one temperament with another” (E 1: 92). She also ends with a compliment and a comment about potential: “If it is said that in spite of this it is easy to read The Scholar’s Daughter with interest and amusement it is obvious how much more might have been expected of the writer than she has given us here” (E 1: 92).

Early in her book reviewing career, Virginia Stephen writes to Madge Vaughan in mid-December 1904 that her “real delight in reviewing is to say nasty things,”18 but that she has to be “respectful” (L 1: 166–67), and late in her life, Woolf worries that her “tea-table training” caused her to take a “sidelong approach” (“Sketch” 150). Such statements suggest that changes made between reading notes and reviews stem from internal censorship (tea-table training, the Angel in the House) or external oppression (editorial intervention). However, Stephen follows her letter to Vaughan with one to Nelly Cecil on 22 December 1904 in which she comments, “I hate the critical attitude of mind because all the time I know what a humbug I am, and ask myself what right I have to dictate what’s good and bad, when I couldn’t, probably, do as well myself!” (L 1: 167), and Woolf follows her “tea-table training” remark with an “on the other hand”: she realizes her “surface manner” has allowed her “to slip in things that would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out loud” (“Sketch” 150). Such statements imply she distrusts her nasty impulses, expresses respect out of humility, and says what she wants in a non-confrontational way. Repression alone cannot explain all her revisions.19

Stephen’s reading notes reveal she is impatient and quick to judge, but her reviews indicate she knows that. For example, in her notes for Louise Kenny’s The Red-Haired Woman, she writes: “quite shapeless; stories wh. lead nowhere; no pretence of telling the story; Her humans seem dead failures; No notion of writing a novel” (VS notes 105, 107). As a reviewer, she consciously steps back, without, however, sacrificing her basic judgment. She writes:

The writer seems to have absorbed a strange miscellany of facts, legends, and theories, which she has poured out without any
regard to form or coherency. Why, we ask, did Miss Kenny burden herself with the pretense of a plot or the pretense of characters? For we are constantly tantalized by signs of an original mind stored with interesting knowledge struggling to express itself in an uncongenial medium. A patient reader, however, will find much that illuminates the Irish character in the labyrinths of Miss Kenny’s novel. (E 1: 79)

Readers of “Two Irish Novels” know Miss Kenny’s work has been sharply criticized—we do not need the damning phrases in Stephen’s notes—but Stephen also includes some praise and blames the problem on genre choice, not on the author’s intelligence, a strategy that allows the author to consider other possibilities for later work. In addition, she implies a critique of her own reading when she imagines a patient reader. As a young reviewer, she slowly and consciously trains herself to follow the reading process she later recommends in “How Should One Read a Book?”—read first as a friend, then as a judge. Furthermore, although she removes personal attacks from her reviews, she does not say one thing in her notes and something entirely different in her reviews.

True, she sometimes tones her notes down. But something besides “tea table training” or editorial intervention contributes to Andrew McNeillie’s description of Woolf as a generally “generous reviewer” (xvi). Maybe Virginia Stephen learns from Ainger’s suggestions about reading and reviewing. Maybe she just does what novices do: creates a reviewing persona that allows her to be herself and communicate her judgments yet acknowledge another writer’s efforts and convey her professional respect. Virginia Stephen’s reviewing practice reveals a typical arc for a young person learning to negotiate between the approval of the reader/teacher/editor and the integrity of one’s self/ideas/voice. Or maybe Virginia Stephen’s lack of a teacher/student relationship in her apprenticeship leads her to create such a relationship in her reviews. Belle is an American memoir about a time long past; James is a well-established great author; Wharton is American; Ainger is dead—they do not need instruction. Indeed, Stephen plays the student to these authors—discovering how Sterling’s memoir uncovers women who “did really exist beneath [a] mass of artificialities” (E 1: 19); thumbing her nose at the great James when she comments that genius would have dissolved the fatigues of reading him, but genius “is precisely what we do not find” (E 1: 23–24); noticing how Wharton leaves the moral up to the reader (E 1: 68); and learning from Ainger
that “certain defects are almost inherent in the [lecture’s] form” (E 1: 84–85). But in the reviews of Harraden and Kenny, the living, writing women in England and Ireland, Stephen plays the teacher she later asks for in “Reviewing,” answering their underlying cry for advice, saying precisely why she dislikes their work, and noting how flaws might be addressed—in effect, putting her “well-stored mind” and “other standards” at their disposal (212).

What Woolf asked for in 1939, Stephen lacked in her apprenticeship, but because she had to teach herself, an act that literally blurs the student/teacher roles, she began to establish a teacher/student relationship in the early reviews. She may have anticipated being the student writer someday, asking for advice from the teacher reviewer, another reason for transforming the harsh criticism of Harraden and Kenny in her notes into a combination of pointing out flaws, making suggestions, and offering encouragement in her reviews. But most likely, teaching herself provided her with teacher training.

Notes

1. Gualtieri thinks Leonard was taking the reviewer’s part against Woolf’s defense of the author’s interests (66–67), and Collier suggests Leonard could not ignore the contradiction between his wife’s proposal and her position as a reviewer (“Journalism” 193). But as Snaith comments, “What should, perhaps, have been a private discussion becomes a public denunciation” (51).

2. Although Bowlby offhandedly suggests that what Woolf proposes is “[s]omewhere between a counseling session and a tutorial” (151).

3. Woolf evidently talked about this idea with others and practiced what she preached. See “Rose Macaulay,” where Macaulay notes that if a person talking with Woolf had written a book, “he might, if lucky, get a verbal review of it, an analysis, appreciation and criticism that was worth more than any printed review” (165).

4. Collier and Brosnan both note the modernist ambivalence, but it has a history. Mays says the tension between art and commerce dates from at least the 1880s and 1890s (12, 25–28), and Onslow sees “the interdependent if sometimes uneasy relationship” (201) between writing novels and writing for periodicals in an even earlier generation of women writers, Ward, Gaskell, and Eliot (200–10). That cultural tension surrounded Virginia Stephen as she grew up and was directly communicated to her by her aunt, Caroline Emelia Stephen, who warned her against going into journalism (L 1: 166), and by Leslie Stephen, who felt ambivalent about his work (93). Frank Swinnerton shared Woolf’s desire that reviewers stand outside the commercial fray. In a dream perhaps as “fanciful” and “utopian” as Collier calls Woolf’s (“Journalism” 193), Swinnerton isolates reviewers from cliques, professors, authors, and publishers and has authors’ names taken off books so they can be judged solely on their merit (120–23).

5. For this essay, I have used or revised a few sentences from “Virginia Stephen, Book Reviewer; or, the Apprentice and Her Editors.” There, my focus was on the venues and editors of Stephen’s apprenticeship; here, I focus on Stephen’s reviewing practice.

6. Jones comes to the same conclusion, seeing Woolf’s proposal as the forerunner to today’s writing programs (34–35). Current creative writing program enrollment indicates that Woolf’s question, “would they pay the doctor’s fee of three guineas?” to get “criticism and
advice” (213), has been answered with a resounding “Yes.” See also Menand’s history of creative writing programs in the United States.

7. Although creative writing programs did not exist, budding male authors might have had access to the male literary societies that had proliferated in London during the Victorian era, some of which had been created by and for literary men of the lower classes (Kent xviii; see also Mays 21), and they might have experienced being critiqued in school. Mepham notes what Virginia Stephen lacked as she moved into the world of letters via the book review (18).

8. I am grateful to Dr. Geoffrey D. Smith, Head, and Rebecca Jewett, Assistant Curator, for their assistance and to The Rare Books and Manuscripts Library of The Ohio State University Libraries for allowing me to examine this book.

9. See, however, Rosenbaum, who suggests Virginia Stephen learned a great deal from her father (164), and Hill, who says Leslie Stephen groomed his daughter for a literary career (351). I am indebted to Rosenbaum for his description of Stephen’s monthly progress as a young journalist and for his answers to my questions.

10. Curtis understands that Woolf’s gutter and stamp system “anticipated the modern listings page” (178), but Sutherland quotes this system as though Woolf thought it existed then. He does not identify it as a proposal, see its sarcasm, or identify its source (86)! Waller makes the same mistake, assuming Woolf was describing current practice (152).

11. Stephen’s review of Howells opens Essays 1, but Kirkpatrick and Clarke, using evidence from Stephen’s journal, list “Social England” as a “Doubtful contribution” (300), making it possibly her first review (see E 1, App. II, 269–71). Smith, after detailing the immaturity of the early review (118–19) and noting the growth in “The Value of Laughter” (121–25), also notes that “Woolf was a quick study” (125).

12. Mrs. Arthur (Mary Kathleen) Lyttelton (1856–1907) was a “considerable student of literature” according to her Times obituary, and her ODNB biographer notes she “devoted much of her life to fighting for the improvement of women’s lives in general, and for the extension of suffrage to women in particular” (Kelly). Because Mrs. Lyttelton’s daughter is mentioned in Virginia Stephen’s letters and because she also did some work for the Guardian Supplement, critics have sometimes conflated the two women, but Stephen always refers to her editor as Mrs. Lyttelton (or Mrs. L) and to her editor’s daughter as Margaret.

13. Virginia Stephen published 160 apprenticeship reviews and essays between 1904 and 1912, but we have only her 1905–1906 reading notes and one set from 1907. One assumes, given the numerous reading notebooks catalogued by Silver, that Woolf took notes for almost everything she reviewed but that all those notes did not survive. I would like to thank the University of Sussex and the Special Collections staff, particularly Joy Eldredge and Karen Watson, for their help in navigating the Monks House Papers. I would also like to thank the Society of Authors for its permission to quote from Virginia Stephen’s unpublished work.

14. All subsequent in-text references to these reviews will cite E 1: see Belle of the Fifties, 17–22; The Golden Bowl, 22–24; House of Mirth, 67–68; two Irish novels, 77–79; Ainger’s criticism, 83–86; and The Scholar’s Daughter, 92–93.

15. All subsequent in-text references to these notes will cite VS notes except for those related to The Golden Bowl, which will cite “Golden,” McNeillie’s transcription in Appendix III of Essays 1. In Virginia Stephen’s notebook, see the reading notes for Belle, 1–9; The Golden Bowl, 10–22; The Red-Haired Woman, 104–07; House of Mirth, 68–69; Lectures and Essays, 108–19; and The Scholar’s Daughter, 135–36. Quotations from the notes preserve Virginia Stephen’s spelling, punctuation, and spacing.

16. See my survey of such studies (“Readin’ “) 168–69.

17. Virginia Stephen’s great-grandfather James Stephen (1758–1832) fought against Britain’s slave trade and Leslie Stephen supported the North, criticizing the Times for its slanted Civil War coverage.
18. Stephen’s *practice* belies her words here, suggesting she exaggerates for the amusement of her correspondent. Waller quotes only Stephen’s letters in describing her reviewing practice, implying they accurately reflect her actual reviewing (152–53). His footnotes and bibliography suggest he never consulted her reviews.

19. Brosnan may overstate the case when she suggests that oppressive editorial policies demanded that Virginia Stephen speak in a certain way (61). Don’t today’s writing teachers advise students to consider their audiences and do their homework about publications? At the time, Virginia Stephen was an apprentice learning her craft, not the extraordinarily skilled essayist we know as Virginia Woolf.

**Works Cited**


CHAPTER TWO

Circulating Ideas and Selling Periodicals: Leonard Woolf, the Nation and Athenaeum, and Topical Debate

Elizabeth Dickens

Throughout their careers as authors, journalists, and publishers, Virginia and Leonard Woolf wrote and published hundreds of books, reviews, articles, and essays that might be considered polemical, whether the subject was art, literature, criticism, international politics, feminism, education, or the publishing industry, to name a handful of their most frequently engaged topics. Despite the strength of their opinions, both Woolfs believed in the power and importance of debate, and both approached their polemical writing with the acknowledgment, explicit or implied, that critical dialogue is necessary to arbitrate among invariably multiple points of view. However, while they shared some common goals with their polemical writing, their respective approaches to written dialogue were distinct. Virginia Woolf’s essay style, argues Melba Cuddy-Keane, is dialogic; in Woolf’s words, a “‘turn & turn about method’” engages multiple sides of a critical discussion within the same essay, encouraging her readers to situate their own thinking in terms of the larger debate (qtd. in Cuddy-Keane 132–36). Rather than straightforwardly articulating a single position in her essays, Virginia Woolf frequently used a sophisticated internal dialogic style addressing the merits of multiple perspectives on a single topic. Leonard Woolf, in contrast, typically aimed in his critical writing to be conventionally persuasive; he outlined his argument clearly and precisely.
Nevertheless, however firm his own convictions on a given subject, Leonard Woolf was opposed to absolutism and its resultant passivity and saw his own intellectual activity as participating in debate by way of provoking readers to response, even if that response was disagreement with his position (*Downhill* 19). Much of the Woolfs’ polemical writing was originally (and often only) journalism, and their commitment to debate contributed to their success in the dialogic forum of critical journalism. In particular, Leonard Woolf’s practice of holding his own view up in contrast to other views was a marked feature of the influential weekly review periodical the *Nation and Athenaeum* (*N&A*) during the mid-1920s, when he was its literary editor.

Periodicals are a polyvocal form; even the most homogenous of them, Margaret Beetham argues, “were and are characterized by diversity of voice and authorial attribution” (97). These voices often support a common goal; periodicals construct more or less coherent and consistent identities, often politically partisan identities. Yet, however the boundaries of individual periodicals are circumscribed, they remain a medium written by multiple authors and containing a variety of types of material; indeed, Beetham identifies “heterogeneity of authorial voice and of kinds of material” as the “central aspects” of the nineteenth-century periodical, and they continued to be key features in the twentieth century (97). The influential political and literary weeklies of the early twentieth century, such as the *N&A*, the *New Age*, and the *New Statesman*, were forums in which questions of politics, economics, religion, art, literature, motor cars, sports, cinema, for example, were all debated side by side and with reference to one another. Ann Ardis describes one such cultural debate that took place within the pages of the *New Age*. In this episode, Beatrice Hastings, a regular contributor and “shadow co-editor” of the *New Age*, engaged Ezra Pound in an editorially approved (though not Pound-approved) debate about poetry (Ardis 408–09). Ardis traces the way Hastings, writing under two different pseudonyms, published articles critically undercutting a series about poetry that the *New Age* had commissioned from Pound. Although the debate was largely one-sided (Pound ignored Hastings for most of it), it was characteristic of the *New Age*’s commitment to editorially initiated periodical dialogue (Ardis 409–10).

The case study I discuss in this essay, a debate about religious belief that took place in the *N&A* during the summer and autumn of 1926, was somewhat different. The *N&A*, while far from dialogue-averse, did not foster a policy of debate in the way that the *New Age* did under A. R. Orage, and the *N&A*’s editorial staff did not plan the religious
belief discussion that occupied so many of its pages for six months. Rather, the debate was grassroots in its origins and then encouraged and continued by the editors only after it had begun in a series of published letters to the editor. The starting point for the debate was a book review by Leonard Woolf. Although Woolf wrote a review each week, most of which passed unnoticed in the correspondence columns, this review sparked a discussion that continued for months, that involved as active participants at least 15,000 people, and that spread from a weekly periodical to a daily newspaper to book publication and back to the N&A.

The *Nation and Athenaeum* was founded as the *Nation*, a Liberal Party weekly, in 1907. During World War I, its editor, H. W. Massingham, moved toward the left in his politics, and with him the *Nation* moved left, so that by the early 1920s it was more in sympathy with Labour than with the Liberals. By 1923, the Liberal proprietors, the Rowntrees, had grown dissatisfied with Massingham’s leadership, and the paper, which had incorporated the literary review the *Athenaeum* in 1921, changed hands. John Maynard Keynes bought a controlling share and Hubert Henderson assumed the editorship; both Keynes and Henderson were confirmed Liberals. The Liberal sweep of the N&A’s leadership was not complete, however, for Keynes offered Leonard Woolf, a staunch Labour supporter, the literary editorship. In his autobiography, Woolf notes his belief that “the world is still deeply divided between those who in the depths of their brain, heart, and intestines agree with Pericles and the French revolution and those who consciously or unconsciously accept the political postulates of Xerxes, Sparta, Louis XIV, Charles I, Queen Victoria, and all modern authoritarians.” Woolf thought that both he and Henderson were “on the side of Pericles,” but they often disagreed about particulars (*Downhill* 161). Woolf wrote a number of letters published in the N&A’s correspondence column during his tenure on its staff; some were related to debates in the literary pages, but a number registered his disagreement with the political position of his own paper. In addition, Woolf and Henderson often disagreed about Woolf’s policy of allowing reviewers to give their opinions uncensored (*Downhill* 138–40; L. Woolf, *Letters* 284–85; Glendinning 224–25). The N&A, like most periodicals, was polyvocal, but Leonard Woolf’s contributions to that paper regularly led to active debate as he positioned his own strong opinions in contrast to other voices in the periodical.

The circulation of ideas is never independent of the economic circulation of the newspapers in which they are published, and the Woolfs were well aware of this connection. They used the Hogarth Press to
publish work, especially the various pamphlet series, that contributed to intellectual debate on a wide range of subjects. Leonard Woolf notes that “it was significant of the political climate in the 1930s that the two best-sellers were Mussolini’s The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism and Maurice Dobb’s Russia Today and Tomorrow, an excellent, though rather rosy, view of Soviet Russia and communism” (Downhill 161). It is illustrative of the Woolfs’ belief in the exchange and debate of ideas that they published both of these books in the same pamphlet series. In the sentence of his autobiography immediately following the contrast of Mussolini and Dodd, Woolf reminds his readers that the intellectual exchange of ideas is inseparable from the economic exchange of their material form; “the pamphlet,” he writes in a discussion about its economic viability in the British book trade, “is not a commodity which . . . is easy to sell in Britain” (Downhill 161).

A separation between the material form and the content of printed debate is artificial not only in Hogarth Press pamphlets but in books and periodicals as well. Dialogue generates ideas, discussion, critical thinking, perhaps political or social action; dialogue also generates books, newspapers, and periodicals. Print accumulates costs, and the circulation of printed ideas necessarily involves the circulation of money. The lack of distinction between ideas and marketable copy arguably becomes most marked in periodical publication. A newspaper or periodical appears at a fixed interval, usually with a fixed amount of content. Its very periodicity distinguishes it as a particularly apt vehicle for the exchange of ideas about current events, as well as for ongoing conversations and debates that continue across successive issues. The N&A, a weekly periodical of about thirty pages, is a case in point. Ideally, its dual goals—to fill its pages with the sort of content people would want to buy and read, and to operate as a forum for the exchange of ideas—were mutually constitutive. Debate and controversy can help to fulfill both goals, stimulating ideas and sales.

In the remainder of this essay, I examine the 1926 discussion in the N&A about religious belief as a case study of periodical debate, a debate sparked, as I noted above, by one of Leonard Woolf’s book reviews. As part of his responsibilities as the N&A’s literary editor, Woolf wrote a weekly, 1,200-word book review column entitled “The World of Books.” The books he reviewed span a wide range of subject matter, and his columns, generally witty and thought-provoking, are also clear expressions of his opinions. Occasionally the N&A published letters to the editor from readers disagreeing with Woolf’s proclamations, but no “World of Books” column drew as much response as the one of 12
June 1926, subtitled “Rationalism and Religion.” In the weeks following the “Rationalism and Religion” review, readers waged a battle in the correspondence column over whether “most educated moderns,” to use Woolf’s words, were religious. At the suggestion of correspondent H. G. Wood, the N&A drew up a questionnaire about religious beliefs and polled its readers, as well as the readers of the Daily News, about the presence or absence, as well as the nature and extent, of their religious beliefs. From August through November of 1926, the N&A was full of questionnaire discussion, as paid contributors and voluntary correspondents alike analyzed the efficacy of the questions and the meaning of the results. In early 1927, the Hogarth Press published a short book by R. B. Braithwaite analyzing the questionnaire responses.

The N&A’s religion debate was sparked by two asides in the “Rationalism and Religion” review. In it Woolf reviews two books of rationalist or atheist persuasion, The Dynamics of Religion by J. M. Robertson and The Religion of an Artist by John Collier, alongside one of Christian persuasion, Essays on Religion by Arthur Clutton-Brock. The majority of the review, while conveying the rationalist bias that Woolf straightforwardly admits to in the first paragraph, is no more provocative than any of his reviews. It is, therefore, somewhat provocative; Woolf never shied away from expressing his strong opinions. The readers who wrote to the editor did not object, however, to Woolf’s characterization of Clutton-Brock’s arguments as “not only often unsound, but simply silly,” nor did anyone publicly register offense at Woolf’s attack on Clutton-Brock’s style as “the fatal fluency and fluidity of the skilled journalist” (“Rationalism and Religion”). Instead, the controversy over the review grew out of two generalizations, apparently casually tossed out. In praising John Collier’s rationalist work, Woolf commends it as “a statement of liberal scepticism, atheism, or agnosticism, which is characteristic of most educated moderns” (“Rationalism and Religion”). Later, in the conclusion to his review, Woolf discusses Clutton-Brock’s decision to turn to God in the face of a universe “cold, indifferent and meaningless to us”; those are Clutton-Brock’s words, to which Woolf adds, parenthetically, “(as it so obviously is)” (“Rationalism and Religion”). These two declarations, that “most educated moderns” are atheists or agnostics and that the universe is “obviously” cold, indifferent and meaningless to humans, are the starting points for the debate.

It is difficult to determine whether Woolf’s statements here might be considered deliberately inflammatory. They are characteristic of Woolf’s habit of speaking his own mind and his practice of provoking
debate. Unlike the instances in which Woolf registered his disagreement with the politics of Keynes and Henderson, the “Rationalism and Religion” review does not dissent from any established view of the *N&A*, which generally abstained from discussing religion, except as it related to politics or current events. Nevertheless, religion is a controversial subject, and Woolf could have suspected that not all readers would be inclined to agree with him about the obviousness of the universe’s indifference and the atheism of “most educated moderns.” Yet aside from the volatile subject matter, the “Rationalism and Religion” review seems no more—and no less—calculated to incite debate than many of Woolf’s book reviews. Even if he were looking for a fight, he surely could not have foreseen the scale of the fallout over this review.

Once the debate began, however, Woolf was likely instrumental in continuing it. As the literary editor he had influence (some of which is documented, as we shall see, and some of which may be inferred) in the decisions to publish the questionnaire and to foster the debate beyond the initial letters to the editor. Woolf and the rest of the editorial staff recognized an opportunity to nurture a grassroots debate; religion, a topic relevant to the periodical’s intellectual and cultural concerns, appeared to be of interest to the *N&A*’s readers. The debate also provided copy for the slower summer months when Parliament was not in session. The rival weekly *New Statesman* jeered at the questionnaire, accusing it of being nothing more than a publicity scheme, a “silly season stunt” more characteristic of the gimmick-inclined *Daily Mail* than the staid and intellectual *N&A* (“Silly Season Religion”).

The controversy over the review was slow to begin. On 19 June, the week after Woolf’s column was published, Watts, the publisher of the two rationalist books, took out a half-page ad highlighting Woolf’s praise. There was no other mention of the review that week, and no reference to it at all in the 26 June issue. On 3 July, a letter to the editor from J. Alder criticizes Woolf’s declaration that the universe is “‘obviously’ cold, indifferent and meaningless.” Woolf replies to the letter that “all one can do is to congratulate Mr. Alder on…finding…‘manifest meaning’ in the universe. His eyesight seems to be better than mine” (Reply to J. Adler). Alder’s letter seems to have ignited a religious debate, and throughout July there were more letters to the editor, generally echoing Adler’s sentiments. The most important of the letters was published on 17 July, four weeks after the initial book review. In it, H. G. Wood takes issue not only with the obviousness of the universe’s indifference, but also with Woolf’s claim that “most educated moderns” are atheists; on what evidence, Wood asks, does Woolf base
this claim? Wood supposes, as Woolf concedes in his response to the letter, that merely the majority of educated people of Woolf’s acquaintance are atheists; Wood argues that the majority of educated people he knows are Christians (Wood, Letter; L. Woolf, Reply to Wood). In addition to his criticism of Woolf’s generalization, Wood posits a solution; he writes, “The readers of The Nation might be regarded as fairly representative of educated moderns. Why should not The Nation canvass its readers and find out where we actually stand in our views of the Universe?” (Letter).

Many of the letters in the following weeks agreed with Wood’s suggestion of a reader poll, and on 14 August, N&A published a questionnaire. It contained fourteen “yes or no” questions drawn up in consultation with Wood, J. M. Robertson (the author of one of the rationalist books in Woolf’s review), George Bernard Shaw, and Augustine Birrell (“Religious Belief”). As R. B. Braithwaite explains in his book discussing the questionnaire, the fifth member of this team, unidentified in the N&A, was Leonard Woolf. Indeed, it appears that Woolf himself initially drew up the questions, which were then offered to the consultants for revision (Braithwaite 26). The questionnaire was inserted as a loose sheet in three successive issues of the N&A; readers were asked to fill it out and return it.³ Both Virginia and Leonard Woolf seem to have had access to the returned forms, for, as Virginia Woolf explains in a 2 September 1926 letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, Leonard “rashly said he would go through them, [and] begins every meal with a statement who’s winning—God or devil. Devil is ahead today. Its amazing to see the names, but I dare not divulge” (L 3: 289). As soon as the questionnaire was published readers began to write letters to the editor complaining about the wording and efficacy of the questions. Henderson, the editor, replied to the complaints, both individually in the correspondence columns and collectively in an article published 4 September, by conceding that the questionnaire was not perfect but arguing that its imperfections did not disqualify it from usefulness in the task of ascertaining readers’ religious beliefs (Reply; “The Questionnaire”).

Meanwhile, the book trade took advantage of the questionnaire buzz for some strategic advertising. In the 28 August issue, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge headed their advertisement with “Has the Questionnaire Made You Think? The following books will help you solve the many problems raised by these questions.” On the following page, Watts highlighted the Robertson and Collier books from Woolf’s original review, reminding readers that
“The Questionnaire was suggested by a sympathetic review of the two following works.” And W. H. Smith booksellers altered their standard ad that week to capitalize on interest in the questionnaire: “All Books advertised or reviewed in ‘The Nation’ or any other paper, including books bearing on the Questionnaire, can be obtained through any of the 1250 bookstalls and bookshops of W. H. Smith & Son.” The book trade had a reciprocal commercial relationship with review periodicals such as the N&A, and this episode provides a clear example of that relationship. A book review generated a controversy that led to periodical content and also to targeted advertising from publishers and booksellers, who, collectively, were the most significant source of advertising revenue for the N&A. The periodical debate appeared to be stimulating interest in these publishers and booksellers’ products, so they evidently calculated the extra advertising to be a worthwhile investment.

The final questionnaire results, announced in the week’s largest headline, appeared in the issue of 16 October 1926, now sixteen weeks after Woolf’s original review; all but three of the issues up to that date contained at least one reference to the religion debate. The N&A published its own results and also the results from the Daily News (“The Questionnaire”). The connection between these two papers was political—both were Liberal Party organs—but the demographics of their audiences were assumed to be rather different. Although there may have been some overlap in the readerships of the two papers, readers of the N&A choosing the Daily News as their daily paper, or vice versa, the Daily News had a circulation fifty-five times that of the N&A, and its readers were presumed to include people who did not choose (or could not afford) to subscribe to a weekly such as the N&A (Braithwaite 7). The point of the comparison between them, the questionnaire commentators suggest, is to compare religious belief between Woolf’s “educated moderns” (the readers of the N&A) with the religious beliefs of those who are presumed to be less educated, and perhaps also less modern (the readers of the Daily News).4

The study of readerships is difficult and prone to pitfalls. Except in individual cases, it is nearly impossible to determine the actual audience of a periodical, though more and less educated guesses can be made. What we can often know with more certainty, however, are prevailing beliefs, on the part of the editorial staff and the general public, about audiences. Beetham argues that one of the ways periodicals maintain continuity in the face of their polyvocality is through circumscribing a consistent implied reader (99). The discussions of the religious belief
questionnaire contain some of the most interesting information about the perceived audience of the N&A that I have yet come across. In his article evaluating the questionnaire results, H. G. Wood suggests, albeit with some qualifications, that the readers of the N&A might represent “the intelligentsia” and those of the Daily News “the average Englishman” (“The Questionnaire”). Other interlocutors in the debate question the N&A claim to represent all “educated moderns”; in a letter to the editor published 20 November, Ronald F. Walker notes that the N&A “is not a popular paper with people of orthodox belief, and they, I find, do quite a lot of thinking.” No one, however, suggests that the audience of the Daily News might be more complex than “the average Englishman.”

Commentators, paid and volunteer, analyzed the validity of the questions and the representativeness of the audience polled, but most, including Wood, agreed that the questionnaire results did seem to support Woolf’s side of the debate, particularly on the question of the universe’s indifference to humanity (Wood, “The Questionnaire”). The most interesting of the responses to the questionnaire is R. B. Braithwaite’s book entitled The State of Religious Belief: An Inquiry Based on “The Nation and Athenaeum” Questionnaire, published by the Hogarth Press in February 1927. Braithwaite offers more detailed speculation about claims that the N&A’s readers represent “educated moderns” and that the questionnaire results represent the N&A’s readers. He dismisses the Daily News audience because 38 percent of its respondents believed the first chapter of Genesis to be historical; such a figure, in Braithwaite’s view, disqualifies these readers from a discussion on the religious beliefs of educated people (8). As for the N&A, the 1,849 questionnaire responses represent roughly one-sixth of the average circulation in the mid-1920s (7). He speculates about reasons particular groups of readers might have been reluctant to respond—agnostic disinterest in questions of faith, or Christian reluctance to talk about personal spiritual matters—but concludes there is no reason to suppose the sample is not representative of the periodical’s readership. The N&A audience, Braithwaite claims, may not be completely representative of “educated moderns”—it is, after all, a politically affiliated paper, and the Liberals do not have a monopoly on education—but its history makes it more eclectic than some. He names four distinct groups to which the paper caters:

(1) the idealistic, religiously minded pacifists of Mr Massingham’s era and the Quaker connection; (2) the “Young Liberals”; (3) the
businessmen who consider Mr Keynes one of the most acute of themselves; (4) aesthetic and academic people. (15)

In the context of the current case study, it is important to note the number of groups with different and potentially conflicting agendas and opinions that converge in this periodical debate about the beliefs of "educated moderns." This is not a debate between two fixed sides of an issue, atheist versus Christian or Woolf versus Wood. Rather, the discussion becomes polyvocal when it takes place among so many people who may have nothing in common aside from a broad sympathy with "the side of Pericles" and a subscription to the N&A.

Of even greater interest than Braithwaite's analysis of the N&A's audience is his evaluation of the questionnaire results. He argues that the tally of "yes's" and "no's" for individual questions provides insufficient information about the respondents' beliefs, and, having obtained the filled-in copies of the questionnaire from the periodical, does more detailed statistical analysis to determine the consistency—or lack thereof—of individual beliefs. He takes a random sample of the questionnaire responses and looks at the answers to various pairs of questions: of the people who claim to believe in some form of Christianity, he notes how many also believe in the Apostles' Creed (only 35%) or the divinity of Christ (around 60%) or a personal God (70%) or who choose to attend religious services (75%). More anomalously, three sample respondents believed in the Apostles' Creed without believing in the divinity of Christ, and nine self-identified materialists also expected personal immortality (Braithwaite 55–57). Braithwaite emphasizes these apparent logical inconsistencies: alleged adherence to belief systems, religious or scientific, without adhering to the professed tenets of those systems.

Most of the people who discuss the questionnaire results—the N&A contributors and correspondents, as well as Braithwaite—agree that the questionnaire fails to reach any definitive conclusions; the questions were too ambiguous, the "yes or no" format too confining, and religious belief itself too individualized to be quantified in this way. Looking at the inconsistencies in many of the responses, Braithwaite concludes that a decline of belief in religious dogmas (assuming the questionnaire results demonstrate such a decline) is due "not to the rise of belief in any rival set of positive dogmas which contradict the religious dogmas, but to the increasing conviction that ultimate explanations of the universe are impossible" (68). Not only did many of the respondents fail to embrace a totalizing belief system, but the debate itself—which was never about
the truth or falsehood of any belief system but rather about the number of adherents—was similarly inconclusive. Wood proposed the questionnaire as a way to arrive at answers to the questions posed in the review and the responses to it; rather than generating any definitive conclusions, however, the questionnaire merely raised further questions and fostered further discussion. In publishing Braithwaite’s book, the Woolfs cemented one particular response to the questionnaire into a more permanent medium than the periodical and granted authority to Braithwaite’s interpretation. Yet Braithwaite’s conclusion was to uphold inconclusiveness. Faith in any system, religious or scientific, that purports to explain the universe, Braithwaite argues, was difficult to sustain in the post-1914 world (71–72). Beliefs are partial and inconsistent, as are, we see in the questionnaire discussions, the attempts to talk about beliefs, particularly among so many people with differing opinions. Periodicals are ideal for discussions, but as polyvocal forms that typically resist closure, they do not necessarily encourage conclusions (Beetham 98).

The N&A’s questionnaire about religious belief is perhaps the most interesting and fully realized example of Leonard Woolf’s ability to use his position as one voice among many in the periodical in order to provoke debate. Periodicals are inclined to dialogue, circulating ideas as they are themselves circulated. Editors may create debate, or, as in this case, they may merely follow the debate, allowing and encouraging the discussion that breaks out when a variety of voices contribute to a controversial topic. This multiplicity of voices and awareness of each individual periodical contributor as a participant in a larger discussion is crucial to our understanding of periodicals as a whole and of their varied contents.

* * *

Questions from the Nation and Athenaeum
Religious Belief Questionnaire

These questions from the Questionnaire on Religious Belief were reprinted in several places, including in the article “The Questionnaire: Final Results” in the N&A and in Braithwaite’s book (27–39):

1. Do you believe in a personal God?

2. Do you believe in an impersonal, purposive, and creative power of which living beings are the vehicle, corresponding to the Life Force, the élan vital, the Evolutionary Appetite, &c.?
3. Do you believe that the basis of reality is matter?
4. Do you believe in personal immortality?
5. Do you believe that Jesus Christ was divine in a sense in which all living men could not be said to be divine?
6. Do you believe in any form of Christianity?
7. Do you believe in the Apostles’ Creed?
8. Do you believe in the formulated tenets of any Church?
9. Are you an active member of any Church?
10. Do you voluntarily attend any religious service regularly?
11. Do you accept the first chapter of Genesis as historical?
12. Do you regard the Bible as inspired in a sense in which the literature of your own country could not be said to be inspired?
13. Do you believe in transubstantiation?
14. Do you believe that Nature is indifferent to our ideals?

Notes

1. For a more detailed explanation of these events, see Smith 150–56; and Woolf, *Downhill* 96–98.
2. For example, the Hogarth Essays, the Hogarth Lectures, and World-Makers and World-Shakers. See Willis 213.
3. See list of questions from the questionnaire at the end of this essay.
4. Although the *N&A* distinguishes between its own audience and that of the *Daily News*, the *New Statesman* lumps the two groups together in its critique of the questionnaire. The *New Statesman* writer characterizes the aim of the questionnaire as an attempt “to discover what the average liberal-minded Englishman of to-day really believes,” and applies that description to the readers of both the *N&A* and the *Daily News*; the *New Statesman* contrasts both papers with the *Daily Mail* (“Silly Season Religion”).
5. Although at seventy-seven pages Braithwaite’s book is no longer than some of the volumes in the Hogarth pamphlet series that were issued in paper wrappers, the Woolfs had *The State of Religious Belief* bound in cloth and issued with a dust jacket, markers of its permanence as a book rather than as some more ephemeral format. The book sold for 4s 6d, which was an average price for a new, cloth-bound book of this length and nature (Woolmer 46); for that amount, however, one could buy nine issues of the *N&A*. Braithwaite’s book was no bestseller (though it is doubtful the Woolfs expected it to be), and in October 1927 Virginia Woolf complains in her diary about the books, including *The State of Religious Belief*, that “eat up all profits” (*D* 3: 162).

Works Cited


Virginia Woolf was very cautious about what she said in print. Under the auspices of the Hogarth Press, the publishing venture she co-owned for many years, Woolf evaded direct editorial interference, enjoying greater freedom of expression than most women writers of the period. Much of her reticence related to enforced gender inequities in expression. “Professions for Women” is a particularly apt example. Even after the woman writer has killed her inner censor, the self-effacing Angel in the House, she is held to a different standard than men (“Professions” 236–38, 240–41). As has been noted, Woolf tones down her assertions as she edits her work (see, e.g., Carroll; Flint, “Revising” 369; Squier). The inclination to delete, obscure or mute her opinions derives from her Victorian “tea-table training...[, which] allow[ed] one...to slip in things that would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out loud” (“Sketch” 148; see Squier 139).

Woolf seems to have envisioned her work—and calculated her marketplace strategies—for at least three different audiences: a mixed-gender public readership, a primarily female readership, and an intimate readership consisting mainly of family and friends. For the general readership, Woolf avoided or downplayed topics likely to provoke disapproval—for example, *Mrs. Dalloway* is very covert with regard to Sapphic and male homoerotic desire. Directed mainly to a female audience, *A Room of One’s Own* might be a bit more explicit about sexuality and gender hostilities. In *A Room*, the narrator playfully evinces anxiety because
the writer Mary Carmichael may have depicted a lesbian relationship between Chloe and Olivia (AROO 80–81). Mockingly alluding to the 1928 obscenity trial of Radclyffe Hall’s The Well of Loneliness (see Marcus; Marshik), the narrator mentions both the judge, Sir Charles Biron, who banned the book (AROO 80), and the extremely conservative Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson Hicks, who advocated for the suppression of such offensive literary material (AROO 84). The narrator only guardedly encourages Carmichael to express what she really thinks about men, “And then I went on very warily, on the very tips of my toes . . . to murmur that she should also learn to laugh, without bitterness, at the vanities—say rather at the peculiarities, for it is a less offensive word—of the other sex” (AROO 89).

This cautionary passage echoes criticism Virginia Stephen encountered early on in her career regarding Melymbrosia, the precursor of The Voyage Out, when Clive Bell criticized her conspicuous contrast between female and male characters (Q. Bell 1: 209). The narrator in A Room models Woolf’s secretive writing style, performing the act of self-censorship by substituting the word “peculiarities” for “vanities.” As such a passage indicates, Woolf also integrates into her work lighthearted or even provocative insider jokes with prudence. Woolf’s subversive writing strategies, self-censorship and editorial decision-making are quite evident in the holograph of Jacob’s Room. Mischievous allusions and caricatures in Jacob’s Room were crafted for the amusement for Woolf’s own circle (see Neverow, Introduction). For example, a passing phrase invokes the implicit membership limit for the Cambridge Apostles and thereby her brother Thoby’s closest friends: “Until midnight or later there would be undergraduates in [Sopwith’s] room, sometimes as many as twelve” (JR 39; my emphasis). Similarly, Lytton Strachey wholeheartedly acknowledged his resemblance to Jacob’s closest friend, writing in a letter to Virginia, “I am such a [Richard] Bonamy” (Woolf and Strachey 144). Jacob’s plan to wear blackface and a turban to a fancy dress party evokes the 1910 Dreadnought Hoax, an outrageous prank in which Virginia Stephen participated wearing, of course, blackface and a turban.3 The whole backdrop of Jacob’s life in London, including his encounters with denizens of the London Bohemian scene such as Florinda, Nick Bramham, and Fanny Elmer, are reconfigurations of Woolf’s own Bloomsbury milieu.4

While Woolf monitored her public expression and encrypted her edgy material, she often expressed herself very openly in her letters, diaries, and memoirs. In February 1922, while revising Jacob’s Room,
she wrote to Strachey, boldly asserting, “Princess B[ibesco] exactly suits my tank. Poinsettias, arum lilies, copulation in tepid water, spume, sperm, semen—that’s my atmosphere” (L 2: 503). In this passage, Woolf reveals her own thresholds of tolerance for lewdness, simultaneously highlighting the thematic of indecency in Jacob’s Room (see Harris). Woolf may here be referring either to Bibesco’s 1921 collection of short stories, I Have Only Myself to Blame, or to her 1922 volume, Balloons. Just a few weeks after Woolf wrote to Strachey, Bibesco’s Only Myself to Blame was excoriated in John O’London’s Weekly, with selected comments quoted in the New York Times (“London”). The British reviewer in “London Book Talk” faults Bibesco for “a lack of reserve, a mode of handling things usually considered intimate, that must disgust the least fastidious, a nastiness of which well-conducted errand boys would be ashamed” and goes on to castigate “other women authors of similar type whose novels now flood the market with lubricities and audacities of every kind.” The underlying reason for these “numberless dirty books written by women,” featuring “[m]arriage sensualized and vulgarized . . . in its most sordid details” and “gynaecological details . . . suitable alone for a midwifery textbook,” is explicated by the reviewer who asserts, “We believe the ‘Emancipation Movement of Women’ to be largely responsible. Its exaggerated individualism is opposed to the great unifying principles of the finest civilizations and is one-sided and dehumanizing” (“London”).

To avoid such embarrassing responses to her own work, Woolf, in the published version of Jacob’s Room, literally observes the ancient meaning of obscenity, keeping it off stage. As she writes regarding Jacob’s tryst with Florinda, “[b]ehind the door [of the bedroom] was the obscene thing” (JR 95). A bit later, Woolf also invokes the Latin meaning of “obscene” (as in “filth”) when Jacob, after his visit to Laurette, encounters the Madame and realizes that prostitution is like a “bag of ordure, with difficulty held together” (JR 109).

In Jacob’s Room, Woolf successfully steers clear of both the derision of reviewers and the risk of obscenity prosecution by using editing, encoded language and deliberate omissions or ellipses. As I show below, the holograph manuscript reveals what Woolf was compelled to excise. Current scholarship has already identified many references to things unacceptable in the novel (see Bishop, Introduction; Bradshaw; Flint, “Revising”; Harris). However, much remains to analyze with regard to what Woolf judged unpublishable. Jacob seems to be involved in at least two polyamorous sexual geometries during his journey to the Continent. The more obvious of the two relationships
occurs when Jacob, traveling alone in Greece, meets and becomes entangled with Sandra Wentworth Williams and, by association, with her homosexual husband, Evan Williams. These complex interactions among Jacob, Sandra, Evan and—at a frustrating distance—Richard Bonamy (who is deeply wounded by Jacob’s betrayal [JR 174]) seem reminiscent of the exceptionally complex arrangements of Lytton Strachey, Dora Carrington, Ralph Partridge and, later on, Gerald Brenan. Their thwarted desires and complex devotion evolved over the period between 1917 and 1921 and then became even more fraught in 1922 when Brenan and Carrington began a covert affair that outraged Partridge. The time frame of these difficult intimate arrangements coincides with the evolution of Jacob’s Room as evidenced in Woolf’s letters. Woolf advocated for Carrington’s marriage to Partridge (see also D 2: 119) to ensure that Carrington would continue to take care of Lytton. The marriage of Carrington and Partridge took place on 21 May 1921. It is worth noting that Woolf crafted the scene regarding Jacob’s purchase of sexual services from Laurette using a conversation with Partridge: “He described a brothel the other night—how, after the event, he & the girl sat over the fire, discussing the coal strike. Girls paraded before him—that was what pleased him—the sense of power” (D 2: 75).

In the draft of Jacob’s Room, a long segment of what became Chapter Eleven describes Jacob’s somewhat obscure interactions with Edward Cruttendon and Jinny Carslake while he stays in Paris (Chapter Eighteen 188–202; 245; 246 in the holograph). Seemingly, Woolf created—as noted above—a montage of her own observations and experiences, amalgamating her own milieu into her work. As Richard Shone has noted in passing (280n2), Woolf based Chapter Eleven on the Continental travels of the Stephen children after their father’s death in February 1904. The holograph version seems also to be based on this trip during which Vanessa and Virginia went first to Venice and Florence, and eventually to Paris with their brother Thoby and their friend Violet Dickinson, both of whom left for London before Vanessa and Virginia did. Clive was Vanessa and Virginia’s personal guide to the pleasures of the city. Woolf may also have used her own later flirtation with Clive in 1908 as material for the implicit ménage à trois at Versailles. By then, Clive and Vanessa had married, and Vanessa was pregnant with the couple’s first son, Julian (Q. Bell 1: 132–35).

The visit to France, and specifically Paris itself, is only sketchily documented in any of the personal correspondence or biographies of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell. Both sisters had written to friends on 25 April
Woolf’s Editorial Self-Censorship

from Venice (L 1: 138; V. Bell, Selected Letters 14). The next letters7 were sent in early May—Vanessa wrote from the Hôtel du Quai D’Orsay in Paris to Margery Snowden on Monday, 2 May 1904 (Selected Letters 16), and Virginia sent a letter to Violet from Paris, dated 6 May 1904 (L 1: 139). Sources (e.g., Q. Bell 1: 89; Bishop, “Virginia” 4; Froula 569; H. Lee 178; Reid 68–69) indicate that Virginia and Vanessa, accompanied by their half brother George who had come to escort them, left Paris and arrived in London on 9 May 1904. The following day, Virginia suffered a severe breakdown. Little is known about the episode of illness itself, although it lasted for months and apparently involved hostility or “mistrust” (Q. Bell 1: 89) toward Vanessa. No letters or diaries relating to the episode seem to have survived. Christine Froula references Clive’s memoir, “Paris 1904,” highlighting his comments about the café Chat Blanc and its second floor, where artists, their models, and their mistresses gathered (568). As Froula notes, Virginia herself mentions the Chat Blanc in the letter to Violet, saying she had a thrilling time there with Clive and smoked at least “half a dozen cigarettes.” Although Virginia is conversational at the beginning, in the latter part of the letter she seems somewhat agitated: “Oh my Violet if you could find me a great solid bit of work to do when I get back that will make me forget my own stupidity I should be so grateful” (L 1: 139–40). Whether in France, on the trip back to England, or in London, something happened, perhaps involving sexual overtones, perhaps related to this instance of “stupidity,” and it deeply upset or disturbed Virginia. Froula argues that this situation could have been caused by the proximity of the loathsome and interfering George (569).

Bell’s anecdotes of his youthful stay in Paris during 1904 probably also provided Woolf with material for Chapter Eleven of Jacob’s Room. Bell lived in “Montparnasse [when it] was a dingy suburb enlivened by English and American painters” (C. Bell 144), including, no doubt, artists like the character Edward Cruttendon. Bell’s description of J. W. Morrice, a talented painter too fond of drink (156–57) and bald (162), suggests he could be the template for the combative and inebriated character Mallison briefly introduced early in the chapter (JR 131–33). Bell notes that his hotel was at the intersection of Boulevard Montparnasse and Boulevard Raspail (C. Bell 144). In the published version of Jacob’s Room, the narrator equates the (misspelled) location with unprintable indecency, a refrain that will recur at the end of Jacob’s Parisian adventure: “Well, not a word of this was ever told to Mrs. Flanders, not what happened when they paid the bill and left the restaurant, and walked along the Boulevard Raspaille” (JR 133).
The sexual undercurrents involving Jacob, Cruttendon, and Carslake are more pronounced in the holograph. Cruttendon and Carslake do not appear in any previous or subsequent chapters in the published novel, although Jacob briefly compares Carslake unfavorably to Sandra Wentworth Williams in Chapter Twelve. Here, having just noticed that Sandra is wearing breeches under her short skirts, Jacob reflects in incomplete sentences, “Women like Fanny Elmer don’t,” and then, “What’s-her-name Carslake didn’t; yet they pretend” (JR 154). The reader must sort out what Sandra does—or wears—that is so strikingly different from that of these other women. Possibly Jacob’s realization has to do with Sandra’s straightforward way of expressing herself, but the passage in the published version only suggests Sandra can say what Woolf cannot:

Mrs. Williams said things straight out. [Jacob] was surprised by his own knowledge of the rules of behaviour; how much more can be said than one thought; how open one can be with a woman; and how little he had known himself before. (JR 154)

In keeping with Woolf’s editorial strategies, the very paragraph that lauds a woman’s freedom of speech and celebrates a man’s ability to converse openly with a woman is actually rigorously censored, and Sandra and Jacob’s forthright observations are completely occluded, leaving the content of their exchange to the reader’s imagination.

Even though the final version still suggests sexual innuendoes, Woolf evidently excised material she thought too dangerous for the marketplace. In the holograph, Patty Carslake—renamed “Jenny” a few lines later—sits on a table swinging her legs (Holograph [hereafter H] 189), behavior which would have been considered seductive and inappropriate at the time. This passage is deleted although other suggestive references to women’s legs and ankles do appear elsewhere in the published novel (see also Marshik 109 regarding women sitting on men’s laps). A bit later in the holograph, “Jenny” is “Jinny,” thus bearing Virginia’s own nickname and, perhaps, predicting the overt sensuality of Jinny in The Waves. In the published version of Jacob’s Room, Jinny is described as “pale, freckled, morbid” (134) and is less audacious than her earlier self. As soon as Patty/Jenny/Jinny appears, Cruttendon, her apparent partner, introduces her to Jacob: “‘here’s a friend. Flanders. An Englishman. Wealthy. Highly connected. Go on, Flanders’” (JR 134). The phrasing, almost identical in both versions, verges on pandering. A bit later, Cruttendon announces, “‘We take a day off on Sundays,
Flanders’” (JR 134); in the holograph, Cruttendon says more flippantly: “We devote the Sabbath to recreation” [H 189]). In both versions, Jinny seems hesitant about Jacob joining them on their Sunday jaunt, asking in the holograph, “Wont he?” and in the final draft, “Will he,” uneasily. In both versions, Cruttendon announces, “‘Yes, he’ll come with us’” (JR 134; H 189).

A short horizontal line in the printed version marks a shift in time and location. Versailles is the destination for the threesome’s Sunday outing. Clive Bell’s mention of the Café de Versailles (143) in Paris could be linked to the heavily edited drafts of this Sunday adventure since the threesome do end up at a café. Curiously, aside from Jacob’s Room, there are almost no references to Versailles in any of Woolf’s other writings. One mention of Versailles does occur in a letter Virginia wrote to Vanessa written from Bayreuth on 10 August 1909 while she was travelling with Sidney Saxon-Turner. Virginia’s description of the Hermitage as “a place built in imitation of Versailles” suggests she had also seen the original at some earlier point. If the Stephen siblings had left Venice on 26 April 1904 on their way to Paris, they could have reached Paris in time to visit Versailles on 1 May 1904, the first Sunday of the month. According to periodicals and guides of the period, the first Sundays of May through November were the only times when the fountains played (see Baedeker 348). In Jacob’s Room, Jacob, Cruttendon and Jinny, shortly after their arrival at Versailles, are described watching one of the fountains erupt as “the dazzling white water, rough and throttled, shot up into the air” (135). Since Woolf relied heavily on her own lived experiences, it seems plausible to speculate she did visit Versailles that first Sunday of May in 1904.

A second fragmented conversation among the characters occurs in both the holograph and the published text with some interesting variants. In the final text, the passage reads, “In went Edward and Jinny, but Jacob waited outside, sitting on his walking-stick” (JR 135), whereas in the holograph, it is Jacob and Jinny who go together into a “pagoda” at Le Hameau while Edward waits sitting on his walking-stick until they emerge (H 190). In the holograph, Woolf hesitates between giving the query “Well?” to Jacob or Edward as the couple emerges from the building (H 190). The blurring of the male characters hints at a relationship that exceeds simple friendship. Also, in a passage that Woolf deletes, Cruttendon “rolled a cigarette” (H 190)—and in both the holograph and the final version, Jacob, rather suggestively, toys with his “stick” (H 190; JR 135). In this particular
passage, the narrator also repeatedly notes that each of the three characters is smiling:

“Well?” said Cruttendon, smiling at Jacob. Jinny waited; Edward waited; and both looked at Jacob. “Well?” said Jacob, smiling and pressing both hands on his stick. “Come along,” he decided; and started off. The others followed him, smiling. (JR 135)

Woolf often uses the motif of the smile to mark sexual transgression in the novel. The first mention of a smile occurs in another sexually fraught episode when Betty Flanders recalls she had Topaz, the orange cat, “gelded” (20)—and she continues into the kitchen “[s]miling” (JR 20). As Jacob, having placed his shillings on the mantelpiece, leaves the prostitute Laurette, she “[s]mile[s] at him,” while Madame, “seeing him out,” evinces “that leer” (JR 115) which makes Jacob queasy. Similarly, Sandra Williams Wentworth smiles at her husband as she seduces Jacob on their last evening in Athens (JR 166).

In the published novel, two blank lines follow the word “smiling.” The next paragraph, which does not appear in the holograph, marks a passage of time: “And then they went to the little café in the by-street where people sit drinking coffee” (JR 135; my emphasis). “Then” implies that something occurred in the interval after the threesome walked off smiling. Further, they go not to just a café in a by-street—rather, one place is implicitly related to another. Perhaps they go first to a cheap hotel where they spend time together in a fashion that Woolf cannot discuss openly in the novel. At this café, in both versions, Jinny tells Jacob Cruttendon is “quite different” and asserts that Jacob cannot “possibly know what Ted means when he says a thing like that” (JR 135), evasive phrasing that again obscures what has actually been said.

In the holograph, the narrator describes an intellectual debate repeatedly described as the “great argument.” Initially about “the thing itself” (H 194) à la G. E. Moore’s Principia Ethica, the argument shifts to art and indecency, a theme Lytton Strachey had addressed in a paper of the same title for the Cambridge Apostles c. 1908 (see Strachey). A number of variants in this section of the holograph are entirely excised in the final version. The incident begins when Cruttendon refers to Rembrandt, perhaps alluding to one or more of Rembrandt’s controversial erotic female nudes, which include Andromeda, Susanna, Diana and her Nymphs, Danaë, and Bathsheba. The paintings were sharply criticized by Rembrandt’s contemporaries when they were
first exhibited (Sluijter). The painting probably most relevant to Jacob’s Room is the depiction of Andromeda, a work that unmistakably evokes sexual bondage. The young woman’s hands are shackled and chained above her head, and her breasts are bared. A heavy piece of fabric, tied loosely around her hips, seems to be tantalizingly likely to fall away.

There are two references to Andromeda in the published version of Jacob’s Room. The first (JR 59) is to the constellation Andromeda in Chapter Four, where Clara Durrant is initially mentioned (in the holograph, a list of constellations in the margin includes Andromeda but Aldebaran is in the text [H 64]). Naming Andromeda in the final version suggests Woolf decided to emphasize the constellation’s mythological significance. In the second reference, Clara is described as “a virgin chained to a rock (somewhere off Lowndes Square)” (JR 129), a victim captive in her mother’s home. Virginia witnessed both her half-sister Stella and her sister Vanessa being exploited—chained to a rock in Hyde Park Gate—by Leslie Stephen. Andromeda was sacrificed to a monster by her own parents, and Clara is pressured by her mother to marry even if she is not attracted to her suitor (JR 86–87). She also hopelessly yearns for Jacob to be her Perseus, proposing marriage to her and thereby rescuing her. Virginia Stephen experienced variants of Clara’s situation. Virginia Stephen’s parents did not protect her from her half-brothers, Gerald and George Duckworth, both of whom sexually molested her (see, for example, “Sketch” 69 and “22 Hyde Park Gate” 177; see also Froula). Further, even in the iconoclastic Bloomsbury milieu, Virginia was expected—and pressured—to marry. Given Woolf’s own experience with sexual persecution, an allusion to Rembrandt’s eroticized nude Andromeda seems both plausible and relevant.

Jacob counters Cruttendon’s claim, referring to Jacopo Tintoretto’s The Origin of the Milky Way, specifically mentioning the National Gallery, London, where the painting was (and still is) located. As the National Gallery’s web site explains, “Jupiter, wishing to immortalise the infant Hercules[,] . . . held him to the breasts of the sleeping Juno. The milk which spurted upwards formed the Milky Way, while some fell downwards giving rise to lilies . . . once present at the base of the painting” (Tintoretto). Cruttendon counters Jacob’s suggestion with a barrage of more recent artists’ names: Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, either Claude Monet or—more plausibly—Édouard Manet, and Paul Cézanne. Works by these artists could readily have been considered indecent. Ingres is known for erotic paintings such as the 1862 “The Turkish Bath,” held in the collection of the Louvre, in which several of
the numerous captive women are fondling each other’s breasts. Roger Fry and Desmond McCarthy’s controversial 1910 exhibit at the Grafton Galleries, which was entitled Manet and the Post-Impressionists, suggests Woolf meant to refer to Manet rather than Monet (perhaps she misspelled the name herself or, alternatively, Edward Bishop, deciphering Woolf’s notoriously illegible writing in the holograph, mistook an “a” for an “o” in the same passage where he also brackets “Origin” as an illegible word [Oligin?]12 (H 194). While Monet is not known for his nudes, Manet certainly is. His 1863 Déjeuner sur l’Herbe,13 first shown at the Salon de Refusés (exhibitions of works the Paris Salon jury declined to display), features a nude woman in the foreground seated on the grass beside two fully dressed men and a second woman scantily clad in the middle ground.

One of Cézanne’s more startling nudes is The Abduction. The 1867 painting now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge illustrates Ovid’s description in the Metamorphoses of Pluto carrying away Proserpine and thus depicts a rape. The reference may also be to Cézanne’s many paintings of nude bathers14—or perhaps even The Orgy or Le Festin (c. 1866–1872). One painting, titled The Bathers, is reproduced as plate I in figure III of Maurice Denis and Roger Fry’s article “Cézanne I” written for the Burlington Magazine. A homoerotic depiction of men nude or undressing by the water, the painting may have influenced some of Duncan Grant’s work such as his 1911 Bathing, currently held at the Tate Gallery, which Richard Cork describes as “[o]stensibly a scene witnessed by the artist at the Serpentine lake in Hyde Park,…show[ing] athletic male bodies diving, swimming and climbing aboard a boat in a sequential manner” (120; see also Cook 35). Richard Bonamy, in Jacob’s Room, mirrors Grant’s painting when he “paus[es] to watch the boys bathing in the Serpentine” (JR 161).

The debate between Cruttendon and Jacob occurs while they are “[w]alking up and down by the lozenge shaped bed packed with stiff pink hyacinths” (H 194). The setting becomes a mnemonic: “The queer thing about this argument was that it was all stuck about, forever, in all their minds with pink hyacinths; a lozenge shaped bed; a yew hedge; the figure of Priapus,15 which stands or some other tapering White God” (H 196). This passage recurs in variant forms in the holograph (H 194, 196, 198, 199, 245) and strongly hints at a ménage à trois.

The pink hyacinths, a legacy of Madame de Pompadour, the powerful mistress of King Louis XV, seem particularly sexualized. The hyacinth is linked to homoeroticism through its association with the beautiful young athlete, Hyacinthus, slain by his lover, the god Apollo,
Woolf’s Editorial Self-Censorship

in a game of discus. Both Richard Dellamora and Kevin Kopelson discuss how such writers as Algernon Swinburne, Walter Pater, and Oscar Wilde use the erotic motifs of this doomed love. For Jacob, the hyacinths are linked to an awakening: “the hyacinths smell made Jacob violently, happy,” and indeed “made Jacob feel a new kind of person” (H 196). References to hyacinths elsewhere in Woolf’s work are linked to transgressive sexual desire. In Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa is thinking of her daughter Elizabeth as a “hyacinth, sheathed in gloss green, with buds just tinted, a hyacinth which had no sun” (120) just before the love-struck Miss Kilman arrives. In To the Lighthouse, Lily Briscoe has a posthumous vision of Mrs. Ramsay “stepping with her usual quickness across fields among whose folds, purplish and soft, among whose flowers, hyacinths or lilies, she vanished” (181). In Orlando, the protagonist thinks of her sexually ambivalent husband as “my hyacinth, husband I mean” (287).

Other garden features mentioned in the holograph, such as the “lozenge shaped bed” and the “yew hedge,” seem innocent enough, but the “figure of Priapus,” the ancient god of fertility notorious for his outsized genitals, does not. Woolf seems to be seeking a motif emblematic of the relationship she is depicting, and given what she knew of the classical, the mythological and the sexual, her reference to Priapus would be neither accidental nor publishable. Could she have been thinking of John Addington Symonds’s description in his 1877 Studies of Greek Poets of an ancient sculpture in the form of a tapering pillar that “combines Aphrodite, Priapus, and Hermaphrodite in one—three heads upon a common pedestal—forming a trinity of sensuous joy” (425)? A volume of the third edition of Symonds’s Studies of Greek Poets, signed “Virginia Stephen April 22 1907,” is in the collection of the Washington State University Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf. Thus, it is quite reasonable to speculate that she had, indeed, read the book.

There are variant endings to Jacob’s encounter with Cruttendon and Carslake in the holograph. Bishop refers to “a sentimental parting” (Introduction xix), but it seems more of a betrayal. In one version, Jacob gives Jinny a bunch of violets as she and Cruttendon part from him, but the passage concludes, “They never met again” (H 198). In another variant, relatively intact in the published version, Jacob stands separate from Jinny and Cruttendon at Gare St. Lazare, one of several Parisian stations with trains to Versailles (in the published version the parting occurs at Gare des Invalides). Jacob is rejected: “With one of those queer movements which are so slight, yet so definite...[that] inflict a good deal of discomfort, Jinny & Cruttendon drew together;
Jacob stood apart.” This passage ends, “Well, it was over” (H 202), while in the published version, it reads, “Something had to be said. Nothing was said” (JR 137). Highlighting the transgressiveness of what has occurred, the narrator in the published version emphasizes (again) that Jacob cannot tell his mother what he has been doing: “No—Mrs. Flanders was told none of this, though Jacob felt, it is safe to say, that nothing in the world was of greater importance” (JR 137).

Like Jacob’s complicated and sexually charged interactions with multiple players, Woolf’s own interactions with her various readerships are sustained and daring flirtations that verge on risky behavior. But unlike Jacob, who is very naïve indeed, Woolf is crafty and cautious. She weighs every word and concocts an elaborate maze of coded and cross-referenced allusions, thereby managing to express her views through subtle variants of her “tea-table training.” And certainly with regard to Jacob’s Room, Woolf, by hinting at but not actually saying the forbidden thing, eludes “the lash that was once almost laid on [her] own shoulders” (AROO 89).

Notes

1. In Three Guineas, the narrator, evidently thinking of Hitler and Mussolini, recommends women use “cheap and so far unforbidden instruments” such as “the private printing press” and “[t]ypewriters and duplicators” to “speak your own mind, in your own words, at your own time, at your own length, at your own bidding” (TG 116; emphasis added).

2. Woolf, invited by Pippa Strachey to speak to the London National Society for Women’s Service, delivered the speech on 21 January 1931. As Hussey documents (218–19), there are four variants of the essay.

3. A friend, Horace Cole, conceived and planned the practical joke. Virginia, Duncan Grant, and two other men dressed as Abyssinian princes, with her brother Adrian as the interpreter and Cole pretending to be a government official, boarded the royal flagship vessel, and were greeted by an honor guard and given a full tour of the ship.

4. I am not arguing that Woolf’s own life is transposed into her writing; rather, I am suggesting here and elsewhere that there are resonances based on her lived experiences. At this point, both Woolf’s life and her writings are textualities requiring interpretation and deserving commentary and analysis.


6. Bishop notes that Woolf had written the section about Jacob at the Acropolis on 6 May 1921 (Introduction xxiv).

7. Or at least the next published letters.

8. Sandra’s smile resonates with Walter Pater’s disturbing description of the Mona Lisa as a “vampire” with an “unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it” (97–98).

9. Avery notes that Strachey “divides British society into four categories along a spectrum of sexual permissiveness” in the essay (200). Jacob and Cruttendon do seem to be arguing about degrees of permissiveness. See also Harris regarding indecency.
10. Woolf also deleted a section that evolved into the essay “A Woman’s College from Outside” (see Flint, “Revising” 365–66).

11. While Woolf may not have seen the Rembrandt, she could readily have seen the equally sexualized “Andromeda and Perseus,” identified by Claude Phillips, Keeper of the Wallace Collection, Hertford House, as a Titian shortly before the museum opened to the public on 22 June 1900 (Ingamells 400). Hertford House is less than two miles away from 22 Hyde Park Gate, and Woolf mentions it in Night and Day, describing Cassandra Otway’s visit to art galleries in London (364). Also, Bernard, in The Waves, links Titian to the motif of being “chained to the rock” (157). See also Munich and E. Lee regarding the motif of Andromeda in Victorian and Edwardian culture.


13. While the final version of the painting is in the Musée d’Orsay, Paris, there is also an earlier version held in the Courtauld Gallery, London, suggesting that Woolf would have had access to it.

14. See Gedo, who notes the homoerotic elements in Cézanne’s work (201).

15. In one of the variant passages in the holograph, Woolf refers to “the grin of the God Priapus,” possibly echoing the pattern of suggestive smiles in the work.

Works Cited


Fifty years after Nietzsche had pronounced the death of God in *The Gay Science*, there was arguably no more precious commodity in the literary and cultural marketplace than the value of the status of truth. With the collapse of traditional epistemological foundations and their accompanying certainty of what constituted “reality” at the close of the nineteenth century came profound transformations in how artists, philosophers and politicians (among others) reimagined the social. Virginia Woolf’s work discloses particular ways in which the value of the status of truth and the role of the truth-teller were altered by such transformations. How a society understands and values truth reveals itself in the processes through which one establishes a relation to oneself as well as to others; it establishes the formation and efficaciousness of law, the social dynamic of the public sphere, and the cultural/aesthetic rendering of public perceptions of “reality” in art and other media. Questions regarding the value of the status of truth had, of course, circulated for centuries; by the nineteenth century’s end, Nietzsche’s voice was one of the most radical in probing potential responses. Woolf, too, engaged with such questions throughout her career, returning repeatedly, like Nietzsche, to Greek philosophy and tragedy. This essay considers several moments in Woolf’s lifelong engagement with the Greeks as crucial to her struggle to represent an ontological reality that would finally include truthful representations of women’s material experiences, including her own.¹
Nietzsche grounded his unorthodox reformulations of truth and truth-telling in a return to what he considered a pre-Socratic understanding of truth, whose value was revealed in particular ways via tragedy, an art form born of the tensions signaled by the dual aesthetic impulses he called “Dionysian” and “Apollonian” in his first book, The Birth of Tragedy, or: Hellenism and Pessimism. Rereading Plato in relation to Greek tragedy, Nietzsche locates a dramatic shift in the relation between “truth” and reality in the rise of Socrates, a shift leading to serious implications for philosophical inquiry as well as for tragedy. In one of many similar formulations in this text, Nietzsche writes, “Socrates is the prototype of the theoretical optimist who, with his faith that the nature of things can be fathomed, ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a panacea, while understanding error as the evil par excellence” (97). With Socrates comes the rise of “theoretical man,” a result of what Nietzsche calls a culture of “optimism with its delusion of limitless power” (111); Alexandrian Greece becomes the epitome of such a culture highlighted by “Greek cheerfulness.” The cheerfulness of “theoretical man,” he states,

combats Dionysian wisdom and art, it seeks to dissolve myth, it substitutes for a metaphysical comfort an earthly consonance[,]... the god of machines and crucibles...; it believes that it can correct the world by knowledge, guide life by science, and actually confine the individual within a limited sphere of solvable problems, from which he can cheerfully say to life: “I desire you; you are worth knowing.” (Nietzsche, Birth 109)

“Let us mark this well,” Nietzsche continues: “the Alexandrian culture, to be able to exist permanently, requires a slave class, but with its optimistic view of life it denies the necessity of such a class, and consequently, when its beautifully seductive and tranquilizing utterances about the ‘dignity of man’ and the ‘dignity of labor’ are no longer effective, it gradually drifts toward a dreadful destruction” (111).

In Nietzsche’s reading, tragedy in its highest aesthetic form (i.e., in the work of Sophocles and Aeschylus) began to disappear as a result of this shift in the value and status of truth. Whereas tragedy had once provided a special kind of knowledge about human existence because it alone expressed the complexities represented by the Dionysian and Apollonian in dialogic tension, the dissolution of myth under the aegis of “theoretical man”—that is, to a purely Apollonian form of individuation—left humanity vulnerable to the seduction of external consolations provided by science on the one hand, and by religion on the other.
That long transformation revealed itself even more fully in an increas-
ingly instrumentalized thinking that Nietzsche eventually named the
“will to knowledge.” Woolf understood such logic as the basis for the
discourses of imperialism, patriarchy, and totalitarianism, all of which
converged in the fraught period of the 1930s–1940s, threatening to
empty language of its complex ambiguities by reducing truth to ade-
quation. Artists’ ability to express changing realities, to bear witness
to the shifts in the value of the status of truth, becomes increasingly
difficult in a media landscape monitored by moralists and official cen-
sors. The seduction of art into propaganda, transforming readers into
a “mass public” catered to by a media establishment promoting the
empty rhetoric of spectacle is, of course, one of the prominent hall-
marks of modernism and the subject of multiple critical analyses.2

This essay explores Woolf’s modernist reconsideration of the relation
of language, truth, and gender as a “positive nihilism.” It is a perspec-
tive that positively imagines “reality” without recourse to the consola-
tions of a supreme being (“certainly and emphatically there is no God”
[“Sketch” 72]); that insists art has the potential to provide something
like an external meaning that counters but does not finally resolve the
meaninglessness of human existence (“that behind the cotton wool is
hidden a pattern” [“Sketch” 72]); that acknowledges women’s centuries-
old struggle to speak truthfully about their own experiences—in public
or even to themselves privately—as psychic, material beings; that is
determined to resist the growing recognition of humanity’s steady pro-
gression toward violent annihilation. Contemplating Woolf’s work as a
positive reshaping of philosophical nihilism reconstellates her engage-
ment with these critical questions within a philosophical context that
retrieves Nietzsche’s radical challenges to the Western tradition’s con-
ception of truth and his focus on Greek tragedy as the aesthetic vehicle
reflecting key transformations in the discursive construction of truth-
telling.3 Michel Foucault’s lecture on parrhesia, or “frankness in speak-
ing the truth” about oneself and about/for society, sharpens my critical
framework. Such contextual lenses can enrich our understanding of a
literary marketplace responding to the myriad political, economic, and
cultural cross-currents of this period, and of Woolf’s efforts to negoti-
ate it as both producer and consumer of art.

Woolf’s insightful reading of the ancient Greeks takes place within
an intellectual milieu already inflected by Nietzsche’s pronouncements
on Greek tragedy and philosophy and his attacks on Christianity; his impact on European thought in the early twentieth century cannot, I think, be exaggerated. Cambridge myth critics F. M. Cornford, Gilbert Murray, and Jane Ellen Harrison all acknowledged their debt to Nietzsche’s work in *The Birth of Tragedy*; Harrison went so far as to call herself a “disciple” of Nietzsche’s in her preface to *Themis.* In a passage I find crucial for contextualizing Woolf’s understanding of the role of art, Nietzsche suggests that watching the sufferings of Dionysus on the stage allowed ancient believers to “dimly conceive [the god’s rebirth] as an end of individuation,” establishing what he calls “the mystery doctrine of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness” (Nietzsche, *Birth* 74).

Woolf’s reading of the ancient Greeks is not, of course, Nietzsche’s. Yet, in recounting her earliest memories in “A Sketch of the Past” and their impact on what she would call her “philosophy of art” one can, I believe, detect echoes of the ontological tension Nietzsche described. Woolf begins her recollections with key sensory impressions we could characterize as “undifferentiations”: vivid colors that she gradually realizes are flowers on her mother’s dress perceived from “very close”; the sound of the waves, and of the little acorn of the window shade being pulled across the floor by the sea breeze as she lay half-asleep in her nursery. More importantly for the artist she would become, they provide the “base” that life “stands upon,” the “bowl that one fills and fills and fills” (“Sketch” 64–65). Woolf adds to these memories what could be described as the “ontological shocks” she encountered in childhood: being “pummeled” by her brother Thoby, thereby realizing the concept of violence; and hearing news of a family friend’s suicide, activating the concept of dread. Woolf relates a third, very different kind of “shock” through which she intuited the formal unity of nature: “I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; ‘That is the whole’, I said” (“Sketch” 71).

In recounting these early impressions, Woolf expresses the ontological dimensions of human experience and the processes by which human being individuates itself from the natural world, and from other human beings. In her own way, I believe she, like Nietzsche, is articulating the tension necessary for a “truthful” rendering of human reality in art, one shaped by experience, memory, imagination. Yet into such a rendering, in Woolf’s case, we must add the shattering impact of the sexual violations she experienced through her half-brothers, Gerald and George
Between Writing and Truth

Duckworth, which are also given detailed space in “A Sketch of the Past.” Woolf struggles to come to terms with her overwhelming sense of shame, her lifelong discomfort with the body, and her sense that “Virginia Stephen was not born on the 25th January 1882, but was born many thousands of years ago; and had from the very first to encounter instincts already acquired by thousands of ancestresses in the past” (“Sketch” 69). My reading seeks not to inscribe Woolf within some sphere of Nietzschean “influence”—no evidence exists to suggest that she ever read Nietzsche—but, rather, to read Woolf and Nietzsche in a dialogic tension that situates Woolf more prominently in the important philosophic and aesthetic conversations that were being shaped in part by Nietzsche’s increasing importance for the intellectual marketplace of ideas during the early decades of the twentieth century.

* * *

“On Not Knowing Greek” appeared in The Common Reader; in it one can hear Woolf’s earliest recognition of the changes taking place in the status of the value of classical truth. Referencing Plato’s “Symposium” she introduces the figure of Socrates, who takes the “question” or “opinion” of a “handsome young boy” and “fingered it, turned it round, looked at it this way and that, stripped it of its inconsistencies and falsities and brought the whole company by degrees to gaze with him at the truth” (32). Socrates takes one to “the summit,” where we can enjoy the splendor of being in the presence of “the indomitable honesty, the courage, the love of truth” (32). Yet in phrasing uncannily similar to Nietzsche’s, Woolf reveals that Socratic truth is a dogmatic truth: “everything which Socrates commands surely ought to be obeyed even like the voice of a God” (33). She appraises the Greeks’ social construction of truth, the purposes it served in public speech, and how particular speakers are charged with legitimately speaking truth: “But truth is various; truth comes to us in different disguises; it is not with the intellect alone that we perceive it” (32).

Truth is to be pursued with all our faculties….It is not to the cloistered disciplinarian mortifying himself in solitude that we are to turn, but to the well-sunned nature, the man who practices the art of living to the best advantage, so that nothing is stunted but some things are permanently more valuable than others. So in these dialogues we are made to seek truth with every part of us. (“On Not Knowing Greek” 33; my emphasis)
In noting here (and, differently, in *Mrs. Dalloway*) the subtle distinction between Socratic and Platonic conceptions of truth, and in evoking Greek tragedy as expressing a fundamental dimension of national culture, Woolf reveals profound insight about the changing nature of the status of truth that will have crucial ramifications on her later work. In recognizing that truth is not purely the domain of the intellectual faculties, but is shaped through the experience of one’s body as a being-in-the-world, Woolf embarks on her lifelong mission to use art in service of such truth.

Without overdetermining the language Woolf uses in “On Not Knowing Greek” to introduce the figure of Socrates within the text of “Symposium”—a dialogue about sexual relations, the Greek public sphere, and the construction of knowledge among other topics—one can begin to correlate the manner through which Woolf will express in her own way the increasing instrumentalization of reason and language within British culture and the repression of the “truth of women’s bodies.” Indeed, these topics are the point of departure for her bathtub epiphany of a sequel to *A Room of One’s Own*, as recorded in her diary on Tuesday, 20 January 1931. The language hauntingly reverberates in “A Sketch of the Past” as she describes her violations as a young girl by Gerald and George Duckworth and mourns her vulnerability following the untimely deaths of her mother and half-sister Stella Duckworth, “two people who should have made those years normal and natural, if not ‘happy’” (“Sketch” 136). Miglena Nikolchina, commenting on this aspect of “On Not Knowing Greek,” writes:

the allure of the “well-sunned nature, [of] the man who practices the art of living to the best advantage” and who makes us “seek truth with every part of us” is ultimately the allure of a language that cannot be known….It is only in her late work that Woolf, employing the significance of the spaces between the sounds, achieves a final—and breathtaking—solution to the problem of the murdered mother and the empty spaces through which she returns. What matters for the time being is the function of Greek as a metaphor for the material Ur-language. (92–93)

Woolf’s conclusion to this early essay provides a final Nietzschean echo. The characters to be found in Greek literature, such as Homer’s, she argues, are even more aware than we are of a ruthless fate. There is a sadness at the back of life which they do not attempt to mitigate.
Entirely aware of their own standing in the shadow, and yet alive to every tremor and gleam of existence, there they endure, and it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our own age. (“On Not Knowing Greek” 38)

Woolf’s atheistic stance, following her father and many of her contemporaries, complements Nietzsche’s lifelong railings, starting with *The Birth of Tragedy*, against what he saw as the “sleep” produced by religion. Woolf’s crucial insight connects the struggle to redeem language from its instrumentalized uses with the struggle to embrace a complex, embodied human truth. This positive construction of nihilism will become more pronounced in the 1930s.

Sophocles’s figure of Antigone arguably becomes Woolf’s primary touchstone to the ancient Greeks, and though Woolf invoked this important character throughout her career, we hear Antigone most clearly in *Three Guineas* and *The Years*. Many critics have enriched our understanding of Woolf’s strategic use of Antigone as a feminist heroine who stands up to patriarchal tyranny and nascent totalitarianism while at the same time symbolizing the violated sister-daughter of Oedipal incest. Clearly Antigone represents an ideal for the kind of truth-teller Woolf seeks to valorize during the increasingly dark years of the 1930s and, I think we can say, that Woolf imagines herself to be, as England confronts its own version of totalitarianism.

Moving in the final pages of *Three Guineas* from “the wireless of the [British] daily press” as it announces ominous restrictions to British women’s daily life by political leaders afflicted with what she calls, after Freud, the “infantile fixation,” to the cries of “an infant… in the black night that now covers Europe, and with no language but a cry,” Woolf casts her reader back to the Greece of Creon and Antigone, where this cry has been “heard before” (*AROO/TG* 269). Using the play as transition to the climactic finale of her own text, Woolf indictsthe West’s long tradition of social, political, economic, and cultural values and their institutionalization for the repressive sex/gender system that has led to totalitarianism and war. Through the figure of Antigone and more importantly, through the special truth revealed by Sophoclean tragedy, Woolf brilliantly locates the repressed “truth of women’s bodies” as the aporia in the discursive formations that have hardened into an instrumentalized logic reaching across the span of history. Her compelling, still controversial recognition that “the public and private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies
and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other” (AROO/TG 270–71) remains eerily pertinent.

Yet it is with the further revelation that “we cannot dissociate ourselves from that figure but are ourselves that figure[,] . . . that we are not passive spectators doomed to unresisting obedience but by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure” (AROO/TG 271) that Woolf, unlike Antigone, becomes a “parrhesiaste,” a particular kind of truth-teller. In writing to the male treasurer of the society hoping to prevent war, Woolf pleads that “a common interest unites us; it is one world, one life. How essential it is that we should realize that unity the dead bodies, the ruined houses prove. . . . Both houses will be ruined, the public and the private, the material and the spiritual, for they are inseparably connected” (AROO/TG 271). Woolf’s text may indict fascism as the immediate cause for the devastation in Spain, but the genius of her argument traces the roots of totalitarian thinking embedded in a discursive web across the temporal and spatial landscape of the West, unveiling the instrumental logic at the epistemological base of every institutional practice. In this role, Woolf serves as a key transitional “truth-teller” in a counter-tradition spanning from Nietzsche to Hannah Arendt and beyond.

* * *

In a series of lectures in 1983, Michel Foucault traced the genealogy of the concept of parrhesia, noting its historically specific shifts within the contexts of classical tragedy, philosophy, and politics in an effort to restore a contemporary understanding of the term. In brief, parrhesia is initially “linked to courage in the face of danger: it demands the courage to speak the truth in spite of some danger. And in its extreme form, telling the truth takes place in the ‘game’ of life and death” (Foucault 16). Foucault also reminds us that the danger is to the interlocutor rather than the speaker: the point of such discourse is not to demonstrate the truth to someone else, but has the function of criticism: criticism of the interlocutor or of the speaker himself. . . . [T]he speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy. (17; 20)

This positive meaning of the term, Foucault suggests, holds from fifth century BCE through the fifth century CE. Foucault, following
Nietzsche, notes a shift in the understanding of this important concept marked by the figure of Socrates, one that will eventually make possible a Roman and then Christian—that is, an imperial and totalizing—articulation of truth-telling grounded in an “administrative” function. That transition moves from a focus of *parrhesiastic* speech as a concern primarily with *logos* (virtue, courage, truth) to one focused on *bios* (life). “[T]he truth that the *parrhesiastic* discourse discloses is the truth of someone’s life, i.e., the kind of relation someone has to truth: how he constitutes himself as someone who has to know the truth through *mathesis* [education], and how this relation to truth is ontologically and ethically manifest in his own life” (Foucault 102). In other words, the term comes to be used as a way of developing an “ethics of the self,” a particular process of individuation.

The significance of tracing such a shift in the status of speaking truth, of how this endows particular persons with the ability to speak such truth, in what contexts at various points in ancient history and why, has also to do with the value of the status of truth for democracy and the status of truth in public speech as well as private behavior. During its transition in ancient Greece, the function of *parrhesia* under Alexander reveals “a struggle between two kinds of power: political power and the power of truth” (Foucault 133). The primary result in such a struggle, Foucault suggests, “is not to bring the interlocutor to a new truth, or to a new level of self-awareness, it is to lead the interlocutor to *internalize* this *parrhesiastic* struggle—to fight within himself against his own faults, and to be with himself” in a particular way (133). It has, further, to do with the establishment of moral subjectivity, which specifically changes again in the Rome of the fourth century CE as part of the conversion to Christianity.

Foucault is interested in tracing the “problematization of truth which characterizes both the end of Presocratic philosophy and the beginning of the kind of philosophy which is still ours today” (170), and which, he suggests, has two primary aspects. One “ensur[es] that the process of reasoning is correct in determining whether a statement is true (or concerns itself with our ability to gain access to the truth).” The other asks: “What is the importance for the individual and for the society of telling the truth, of knowing the truth, of having people who tell the truth, as well as knowing how to recognize them?” (Foucault 170).

With such a framework in mind, one can see how tragedy offered a unique window into the ancient Greeks’ dilemma over changing values of truth and truth-telling, and why tragedy factored so heavily into the work of Nietzsche and Woolf, among others. Within the Thebes of
Sophocles’s play, Antigone performs her *parrhesiastic* role in the earliest sense described by Foucault: she courageously speaks the truth to Creon, who has the power to silence her, with the intention of criticism, yet regardless of the consequences to herself or—importantly—to others. In this way, we can see that while Antigone functions emblematically for Woolf as a proto-feminist truth-teller, to whom Woolf repeatedly returns in her stand against totalitarian and patriarchal tyranny, she is also a problematic figure. The way in which Woolf *herself* embodies this role of *parrhesiaste* as author of her own text is also much more complicated (and not only, of course, because she is a living human being). The difficulty in thinking about Woolf’s truth-telling has everything to do with her dual role in not only speaking the truth as an artist, but in internalizing that struggle in her own efforts to “be with herself,” to tell the truth of her own experiences in a particular historical occasion and thus construct her own subjectivity in an ominously shifting political landscape.

Is Woolf successful in her efforts to speak the truth to her own times? On the one hand of course she is: *Three Guineas* is a searing indictment of totalitarian thinking, patriarchal exclusion, and war, even if the essay was spurned during her lifetime by people whose opinions she deeply valued. Yet the risks she takes in writing the memoir that will become “A Sketch of the Past” are far greater, casting her more profoundly into the role of *parrhesiaste*. Woolf’s history of experimentation with narrative form signals her search for an appropriate genre for the kind of truth-telling once revealed by tragedy. This is at least one reason why her work in the 1930s and 1940s is so endlessly fascinating, and what will make “A Sketch of the Past”—a text unmarked by the haunting figure of Antigone—so remarkable.

* * *

Telling the truth about women’s bodies became even more daunting in the increasingly regulated literary marketplace controlled by British censors, as Celia Marshik demonstrates: “Woolf turned to satire and parody in response to moralists and censors, but she also trained her gaze on the censorship dialectic itself and appeared to recognize her own compliance with the culture of censorship” (91). As writers, but even more as publishers, both Leonard and Virginia internalized the disciplinary monitor. Marshik reads the 1931 lecture “Professions for Women” and her 1941 letter to Ethel Smyth as evidence of Woolf’s acknowledgment of the specifically gendered impact of government
censors. “[Woolf] admitted that she had not ‘solved’ the problem of ‘telling the truth about my own experiences as a body.’ . . . [S]he doubted ‘that any woman has solved it yet’” (Marshik 124–25). Writing of such experiences privately in a letter to a friend or in a memoir shared with intimates is one kind of truth-telling, certainly. “When we read Woolf, then, we should remember the ‘inevitable policeman,’ who was no mere bogey. If we read her work carefully, we can discern him on the horizon. We can also perceive Woolf’s ethics of indecency prompting her readers to make him obsolete,” Marshik concludes (125).

The censorship with which Woolf and her contemporaries had to deal threatened to contort even the most nuanced language used to describe intimate aspects of the human experience. Surveillance of her own language, internalizing the disciplinary monitor, Woolf walked a fine line between truth-teller and potential criminal. What Marshik names “Woolf’s ethics of indecency” suggests another context for considering Woolf’s positive nihilism as she struggled to develop an “ethics of the self” as an artist/publisher and as a private person. “What is at stake,” to cite Foucault, “is not the disclosure of a secret which has to [be] excavated from out of the depths of the soul” but “the relation of the self to truth. . . . [This] involves . . . a set of rational principles which are grounded in general statements about the world, human life, necessity, happiness, freedom . . . and . . . practical rules for behavior” (165; emphasis added).

I am suggesting that Woolf’s late works signal her boldest effort to articulate what I have been calling a positive nihilism: an endeavor to construct an ethics of the self that encompasses parrhesiastic speech, that speaks the multivalent truths of human experience, even as the possibilities for such a project are being eclipsed by the emptying out of language enabled by an instrumentalized logic manifesting itself on a planetary scale. Her experiments with literary form—nothing less than a revisionist history of English literature telescoped into the pageant at the heart of Between the Acts as well as a new literary history of England, of which we are left with only unfinished fragments—are threaded through the biography of Roger Fry, in which she again contemplates the relation of aesthetics to life even as she undertakes her most daring life-writing, “A Sketch of the Past.” I see Woolf attempting to revise the legacy of Enlightenment modernity without abandoning it: her positive nihilism is the mark of that struggle. Using Nietzsche as a foil to Woolf allows us to clarify the nuances in her understanding of the Enlightenment legacy: her work at least in part offers a critique of rationality as it hardens into instrumentalized
truth. Nikolchina moves us toward this view in her reading of *Between the Acts*:

Marked as it is by ruptures and breaks, in its very end [BA] takes us to a rift. This rift opens up into a world that is never completed; it completes the novel by adding to it incompleteness... [T]he sudden rift in the finale, in agreement with the novel’s overall punctuated stylistic, does not “raise the curtain on nothingness” but rather on whatever is. (133)

I suggest that the novel does “raise the curtain on nothingness,” but positively, if one contemplates Woolf’s work in this period as a collective meditation on art’s capacity to “reveal the hidden pattern” even as “reality” grows more violent.

As Woolf records in her diary the growing darkness imposed by war, she nevertheless begins a new project, a literary history of England with a working title of “Notes for Reading at Random” (edited by Brenda Silver with the title “‘Anon’ and ‘The Reader’”). Such an undertaking, beginning with the birth of narrative in the song of the sexually undifferentiated artist “Anon” and a (re)construction of the history of the reader, seems a wonderfully hopeful, if remarkably daunting, project. One imagines, given the emphasis on truth-telling in the work leading immediately up to “Notes for Reading at Random,” that Woolf envisioned re-educating her readers to help them hear the truths of women’s experience coded across the span of the English literary past, preparing them for a new kind of future literature. In the fragmentary chapters of this last work one hears the emphasis on rustic “song” and the local emergence from nature of the early bards, an emphasis on the dialogic rhythms of literature with primeval cadences, silences, and sounds. In many ways, this work shares an affinity with Nietzsche’s project in *The Birth of Tragedy* to understand the special nature of drama. In both texts, readers are asked to think more fully about the temporal and spatial specificity of local culture on the development of a national literary form and the latter’s ability to deliver truth without hardening into dogma. In both, readers hear the human struggle to individuate as social subjects while honoring their planetary connections to humanity and nature. Woolf’s vision is a significant culmination of her positive nihilism, reflecting her ability to pursue it even under the most oppressive of writing/thinking conditions.

Yet, “A Sketch of the Past” remains the exemplary *parrhesiastic* text of Woolf’s late work, evidencing truth as both an intellectual and a
material process. Here, Woolf comes to terms most fully with the internalization of truthful speech, acknowledging the spectrum from ecstasy and rapture to acute pain. We marvel at the function of memory tracing life at its most exuberant and most horrifying. Here is the Dionysian immersion in nature and the Apollonian artist shaping and ordering, the dialogic tension grounding a language speaking the fullness of a complex truth. It is no coincidence that here Woolf reflects on “what makes her a writer”: the “shock-receiving capacity” and the ability to “make real” the “revelation of some order”:

I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts back together…. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right, making a character come together. From this I reach what I might call a philosophy. (“Sketch” 72)

In suggesting that Woolf articulates a positive nihilism, I celebrate her ability to imagine a future filled with moments of rapture while she simultaneously bears witness to the meaninglessness of human existence and the cruelty of human violence. Her premonition that this future, rather than liberating art into truth, threatens to empty language of its ambiguities, establishing truth as adequation culminating in efficiency and control, increasingly dominates the recollections of her past. Yet, the memoir’s uncanny beauty is located in its constellation of the personal with the social, the individual who sees herself as part of a long line of violated “ancestresses” but also an embodiment of the spirit of “Anon.” In these last writings, Woolf takes her place most fully in a counter-tradition that reaches back to the Greeks with Nietzsche and looks forward to the work of diverse artists, philosophers, theorists who wrestle with the limits of language even while pushing beyond them.

**Notes**

1. The scholarship regarding the impact of Woolf’s reading, thinking about and translating classical Greek texts for her own work is diverse and ongoing. I have found Dalgarno’s *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World* among the most compelling. Froula, Silver, and Marcus have made crucial contributions to contemporary readers’ understanding of these connections as well, and I express my indebtedness to their work.
2. My oversimplified references to this process are given their proper amplification in landmark works including Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*, and Tratner’s *Modernism and Mass Politics*, among many others. Dalgarno characterizes Woolf’s decision to describe but not to publish grisly photographs from the Spanish Civil War in *Three Guineas* as a rejection of propaganda (Chapter 6).

3. Banfield contributes an exemplary study of Woolf’s engagement with the philosophy of the Cambridge Apostles. My task in the present essay is to reposition Woolf in a broader European intellectual context that was debating the impact of Nietzsche’s work among others.

4. Silk and Stern (144). “Among classical scholars, the new fame of their eccentric ex-colleague made it harder to ignore him, although for a time no easier to accept him as a Hellenist worthy of serious attention; and it was not for some years that there was any real enthusiasm about BT from members of the profession. One of the first to speak up for Nietzsche’s book was the English scholar F. M. Cornford, in whose important study of early Greek thought, *From Religion to Philosophy* (1912), it was pronounced ‘a work of profound imaginative insight, which left the scholarship of a generation toiling in the rear’” (Silk and Stern 126).

5. Levy credits Paul Tillich with coining this resonant term in “denoting the mind’s encounter with the ‘threat of non-being,’ when presuppositions regarding the structure and meaning of reality disappear into the abyss” (107). Levy reads the “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse* in a survey of twentieth-century British and Irish literature from this perspective.

6. See important positive readings of Woolf’s uses of Antigone by Swanson, Cramer, Marcus, Neverow and Pawlowski, among many others, including Froula, who complicates the legacy of Antigone. Dalgarno also discusses Antigone, arguing that Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*, not Sophocles’s play, most significantly animates Woolf’s thinking about gender, language, and subjectivity.

7. See Woolf’s *Diary* (vol. 5) and *Letters* (vol. 6) for various negative comments on *Three Guineas* by reviewers as well as friends such as Vita Sackville-West.

---

**Works Cited**


PART II

Woolf’s Relationship to the Marketplace
Most scholars writing about Katherine Mansfield’s “Bliss” (1918) over the past forty years have cited at least one of two reactions Virginia Woolf semi-privately penned to the story at some point in their analyses:

I threw down Bliss with the exclamation, “She’s done for!” Indeed I don’t see how much faith in her as woman or writer can survive that sort of story. I shall have to accept the fact, I’m afraid, that her mind is a very thin soil, laid an inch or two deep upon very barren rock. For Bliss is long enough to give her a chance of going deeper. Instead she is content with superficial smartness; & the whole conception is poor, cheap, not the vision, however imperfect, of an interesting mind. She writes badly too. And the effect was as I say, to give me an impression of her callousness & hardness as a human being. I shall read it again; but I don’t suppose I shall change. She’ll go on doing this sort of thing, perfectly to her & Murry’s satisfaction....Or is it absurd to read all this criticism of her personally into a story? (D 1: 179)

I’ve not read K. Mansfield [The Garden Party], and don’t mean to. I read Bliss; and it was so brilliant,—so hard, and so shallow, and so sentimental that I had to rush to the bookcase for something to drink. Shakespeare, Conrad, even Virginia Woolf. But she takes in all the reviewers, and I daresay I’m wrong (don’t be taken in by
that display of modesty.) Middleton Murry is a posturing Byronic little man; pale; penetrating: with bad teeth; histrionic; an egoist; not, I think, very honest; but a good journalist, and works like a horse, and writes the poetry a very old hack might write—but this is spiteful. Do not let my views reach the public. People say we writers are jealous. (L 2: 514–15)

Understandably eager to associate a Mansfield descending from the modest pedestal on which the New Criticism had briefly placed her with an increasingly canonical female contemporary, critics have regularly summoned snippets of Woolf’s gossipy remarks as evidence of her warranted jealousy before proceeding to make their “cases for Katherine.” But I wish to linger over Woolf’s words, to place them within the context of the writers’ six-year friendship, and to reflect on Woolf becoming a professional author with Mansfield serving as both an inspiring instigator and an ardent antagonist. Instead of brushing aside her comments, I want to follow an example Woolf herself would establish during the 1920s and acknowledge gossip’s potential for attracting to literature a broader range of readers keen on discovering what they have in common with its characters and its creators. And by digging beneath the “dirt” as a Woolfian “common reader” might, I hope to present a more nuanced picture of Woolf and Mansfield as friends and rivals entering a competitive publishing marketplace not unlike our own.

Even as many of her male contemporaries were trying to solidify a profession of English criticism that shunned as “gossip” an overly biographical approach to interpretation, Woolf understood that readerly curiosity about the lives of authors would continue to encourage textual circulation more than formal criticism ever could. Though she did worry that chatter about writers might limit how they were read, she saw clearly how gossip would draw more ordinary readers to literature, and to the process of “making” their own “wholes” out of the authors and works they avidly read (E 3: 483ff). In “Byron & Mr Briggs” (1921), the abandoned introduction to the collection that would become The Common Reader (1925), Woolf celebrated gossip’s ability to inspire everyday readers to wait “impatiently” for three weeks to get Byrons letters from the library” (E 3: 479), and encourage them to form their own images of writers and ideas about their writings. It was thus in response to emerging academic critics as well as to the experience of reading, being read by, and conversing with Mansfield that Woolf conceived of a more independent “common reader” who did
not accept interpretations of great writing from figures like Coleridge (E 3: 478–79), but would “get from literature the sequence of [his] own emotions.” He would achieve a kind of readerly impersonality not by adopting a prescribed “method” of textual analysis and ignoring the writer’s life story, but by “ceas[ing] to be so-an-so, in such and such a room” and “retain[ing] only the truth” of “emotions, which [he] ha[s] in common with others” (E 3: 489).

Within the next decade, Woolf expanded her defense of gossip in A Room of One’s Own, emphasizing how this mode of discourse often considered “feminine” might empower readers to imagine the conditions of writing subjects overlooked in traditional histories. Considering the work of Lady Winchilsea (Anne Finch), for instance, Woolf’s narrator objects to a claim—made, significantly, by Katherine Mansfield’s own biography–manipulating widower John Middleton Murry—that any consideration of her vexed relations with her male contemporaries would amount to “dubious gossip.” “[T]here I do not agree with him,” Room’s narrator explains, “for I should like to have had more even of dubious gossip so that I might have found out or made up some image of this melancholy lady, who”—not unlike Murry’s own dead wife Mansfield—“loved wandering in fields and thinking about unusual things and scorned, so rashly, so unwisely, ‘the dull manage of a servile house’” (AROO 60).

Thus while Woolf did challenge gossip that too simply “summed up” individuals and authors, she hardly wished to abandon it altogether. Rather she often practiced gossip similar to the kind promoted more recently by Patricia Meyer Spacks: a mode of communication by which we, as readers of fiction and of life, “use talk about others to reflect on ourselves,” to “enlarge [our] knowledge of one another” (5). It is through such “serious” gossip—which “assumes the importance” not only of particularities “but also of relationships” (43) and self-reflection—that Woolf makes the crucial turn toward “moral investigation” (6) she initiates in the quotations above, and pursues more fully in her fiction and essays in the years to come. For although critics have generally cited only Woolf’s primary, impulsively “destructive” bodily responses (throwing down the volume, rushing to the bookcase) in their discussions of “Bliss,” I have quoted her reactions more fully above in order to show how she actually moves to the more “constructive” position that Spacks recommends as her reflections proceed. After physically separating herself from Mansfield’s work, and distancing herself from Mansfield “as woman” by associating her with the opportunistic poseur Murry, Woolf does at least begin to question her
impulses in ways that will enrich her future public writing. For even though, as I will show, what Woolf had found so “hard” in “Bliss” had been its mockery of her in the character of Pearl Fulton, and its “sentimental” portrait of Mansfield herself as innocent Bertha Young, she would demonstrate a greater understanding of her younger rival’s struggles in writings composed in the years after the latter’s early death in 1923.

In what follows, then, after surveying the impressions Woolf and Mansfield had of one another’s positions in the earliest years of their friendship, I will demonstrate how “Bliss” emerged as the product of a sickly Mansfield’s antipathy toward Woolf as she wrote from convalescent exile in France in early 1918. More specifically, I will show how Mansfield, angry that Woolf had borrowed a story idea of hers to draft “Kew Gardens” the summer before and envious of Leslie Stephen’s daughter’s material comforts and improving health as her own failed, satirized Woolf in her best known story. But while Woolf’s reactions to “Bliss” suggest she had not missed Mansfield’s point, her later published writings reveal how she transformed the destructive “gossip” of her diaries and letters into a more constructive discourse in her fiction and essays in the twenties and beyond.

On or About August 1918

On or about August 1918, Katherine Mansfield was several months shy of thirty—the age of her new story’s naive heroine, Bertha Young—when “Bliss” became her first contribution to a prestigious journal. Despite her youth and unlike her “artist manqué” protagonist (Mansfield, Collected Letters 2: 121), Mansfield had already published enough short stories in various magazines by 1917 to make Woolf take notice and request that her long story “Prelude” become the Hogarth Press’s third publication the following year. In early 1918 Woolf herself had turned 36—the age her future character Orlando would casually attain after living for centuries—and, like her hero/ine, Woolf was only beginning to make a name for herself in literary London. Though The Voyage Out (1915) had been respectably received, it had taken her seven years to write and led to two breakdowns. Furthermore, the novel, like her first short story, had been published with family assistance.3

Mansfield, on the other hand, really was making a name for herself in literary London without the help of family connections. Though her banker father in New Zealand—not the Oxbridge “educated man”
Woolf would describe in *Three Guineas*—did send her money, Mansfield usually spent nearly all of it on little magazine ventures with her eternally penniless partner, the Oxford dropout Murry. Still, Mansfield had managed to place her fiction in the recently reinvented *New Age* by the time she was twenty-one, publish the collection *In a German Pension* by twenty-three, work with the *Blue Review* and *Rhythm* by age twenty-five, and feature pieces in four issues of *Signature* around her twenty-seventh birthday (Daly 31). Though by 1918 both Woolfs were apparently associating Mansfield with “Grub Street,” Virginia herself was actually writing primarily for money as journalist more often than her younger, poorer counterpart.

Establishing herself in journalism after her father’s death in 1904 with the help of another family friend Violet Dickinson, Woolf did enjoy “brief celebrity” as a regular contributor to *Cornhill Magazine*—which her father had edited from 1871 to 1882 (McNeillie xi). But beyond this moment in the spotlight, Duckworth’s *The Voyage Out* and Hogarth’s “The Mark on the Wall” were the only “Virginia Woolf”-signed fictions to appear before May of 1919, when Hogarth published “Kew Gardens”—a short piece she had drafted nearly two years earlier with Mansfield’s help.

When the two women first met in late 1916, it is clear, both were aware that a younger Mansfield—without the blessings of Englishness or deep ties to London publishing—had seen her fiction more widely and more often in print than Woolf had. Understandably, then, an intense yet unsteady friendship formed between them, only to become more fraught as Woolf’s health and fortunes improved while Mansfield’s declined. Thus her beneficent aid to Woolf on a story that helped her find the “beginnings of her modernist style” (Gay 291) would soon inflame bitter regret in Mansfield that only intensified when she experienced her first pulmonary hemorrhage during “Bliss”’s frantic composition in February 1918.

**“Garsington-gate”**

Although a number of critics agree that Mansfield helped Woolf make her first “departure from traditional ways of seeing” (Alpers 251) in “Kew Gardens” in 1917, none imagines that the notoriously fickle author might have come to lament her writerly altruism soon after. But Woolf’s violent reactions to “Bliss,” prompted by the piece’s intimately allusive language, offer hints that she actually did.
Before a visit to the Woolfs’ Asheham estate to discuss “Prelude”’s progress at Hogarth, so the story goes, Mansfield had written to Woolf describing Ottoline Morrell’s garden at Garsington, suggesting how the scenery might inspire a short story—a “conversation set to flow-
ers,” featuring “several pairs of people” (Mansfield, Collected Letters 1: 325; original emphasis) wandering “among flower beds in various states of enchantment” (Alpers 251). Inspired by Mansfield’s missive, scholars believe, Woolf then “transposed” the suggested sketch “from Garsington to Kew” (Smith 137), and shared the product of her experimental labors with Mansfield during their “Prelude” meeting the following week. Mansfield’s positive response to Woolf’s piece, written shortly after the visit, has generally struck critics as earnest. But the insincere protestations Mansfield makes in between a statement exclaim-
ing how “curious & thrilling” it was that she and Woolf should “be after so nearly the same thing” and one pronouncing Woolf’s “Flower Bed” [story] to be “very good” may have given Woolf reason to doubt entire epistle’s honesty. For Woolf could not help but notice that Mansfield was misrepresenting herself when she insisted in the paragraph interrupting her flattery that she never “spen[t] any of [her] precious time swapping hats or committing adultery” (Mansfield, Collected Letters 1: 327; original emphasis). Indeed, not only had Mansfield apparently admitted to Woolf early in their friendship that she had “gone every sort of hog since she was 17” (L 2: 159), but Woolf was also aware that Mansfield had, in fact, been “committing adultery” by living with Murry for years while remaining married to her first husband, George Bowden.

But if Mansfield was indeed sending Woolf poisoned darts of false praise, what could have compelled her to turn from benevolent men-
tor to hostile rival so quickly? One factor seems to have been an understandable envy, which Mansfield often expressed toward Woolf in gossip with other correspondents (Collected Letters 3: 105, 128). And another appears to have involved gossip Mansfield had heard Woolf was spreading about her. On the one hand, while she had encour-
aged Woolf to write a garden story, Mansfield naturally seems to have come to resent the fact that Woolf had had the opportunity to draft a sketch while she had not. After all, in the surviving letter to Ottoline, Mansfield had expressed a strong desire to “have a fling at” a garden story of her own “as soon as [she] ha[d] the time.” That she did not have the time, however, was obvious, as she went on to lament her “poverty,” and express the need—more than a decade before Woolf would publicly do so on behalf of women not unlike Mansfield—for
“absolute privacy” in “an exquisite room” in order to create (Mansfield, *Collected Letters* 1: 325).

On the other hand, Mansfield also may have felt that she had been recently slandered by Woolf. For it is likely that Mansfield had caught wind of Woolf’s snobbish observation to Ottoline that their mutual friend’s flowery epistolary scribblings concerning Garsington were “rather a relief after the actresses, A.B.C.’s, and paintpots” (*L* 2: 174). Here, Woolf was clearly being catty about Mansfield’s work as a movie extra, her supposed patronage of lowbrow teashops, and her over-use of make-up, if not also alluding to her recent, semi-sympathetic representation of a woman similarly inclined in a *New Age* piece titled “The Common Round.” In fact, it is likely that Woolf’s comment about Mansfield’s preoccupations had prompted the younger writer to defend her honor in the post-Asheham note in the first place. Yet, if Woolf found it hard to believe the blamelessness Mansfield sought to claim in that letter, she surely had reason to be suspicious of the praise Mansfield lavished upon her in it as well.

**Mansfield’s B[e]rgeois Re[Be]rth**

Not unlike the “common reader” Mr. Briggs turning to Byron’s letters to make sense of his poetry, Woolf often returned to Mansfield’s missives both during her life and after her death to in an attempt to make some “whole” of the “Katherine” she knew and read. Thus with her friend’s semi-private words in mind when she sat down to read “Bliss” in the *English Review*, Woolf would certainly have recognized immediately Mansfield’s distinctive epistolary persona in its protagonist Bertha Young.

From “Bliss”’s very beginning, we follow an enthusiastic Bertha anticipating a dinner party she and her husband Harry will be hosting that evening for a group of fashionable friends. Arriving at home to make the final preparations for the gathering, a blissful Bertha briefly plays with her infant daughter and joyfully arranges pillows and fruit before gazing into her garden to rhapsodize about her overwhelming good fortune. She is young, she reflects, and “g[e]t[s] on” with her “good pal” husband “splendidly.” They have an “adorable baby,” enough money to go abroad each summer, and an “absolutely satisfactory” house and garden. Bertha is grateful for having “modern, thrilling friends” who are artists “keen on social questions,” and for her access to unspecified “books” and “music,” as well as to a “wonderful little
dressmaker” and a “new cook” who makes “the most superb omelettes” (342). Stirred by a pear tree blooming outside the window, Bertha suddenly concludes that “really” she has “everything,” and “seem[s] to see on her eyelids” the blossoming pear tree “as a symbol of her own life” (Short Stories 342).

As the small group of artsy guests trickles into the Young home, we learn that Bertha most eagerly awaits the arrival of a “beautiful wom[a]n who h[a]s something strange about [her]” (342). Pearl Fulton—with whom Bertha has only spoken a few times, but with whom she senses great potential intimacy—arrives slightly late, dressed in silver, with “her head a little on one side” (344). Throughout the guests’ self-consciously “modern” dinner conversation, Pearl generally emits only murmurs. But Bertha nonetheless becomes increasingly convinced that she shares something special with Pearl, ultimately finding confirmation in that belief as the women gaze together at the very pear tree Bertha had earlier decided embodied her bliss.

As if guided by some socially sanctioned pre-Oedipal mandate, however, Bertha’s intense feeling of homoerotic connection with Pearl immediately morphs into a strong compulsion to be alone with her husband, whom she has never, up until now, desired in “that way” (348). Only moments after gaining this renewed heterosexual awareness, however, Bertha learns that what she really “shares” with Pearl is not some mysterious connection represented by the moonlit tree outside, but the physical body of her husband. Harry’s phallus thus replaces the phallic tree, critics have noted, when Bertha witnesses him furiously embracing Pearl before she leaves.7 Confused, Bertha looks again to her pear tree as if for guidance, and its “still” flowering perfection seems to offer her some sort of consolation (350).

For decades, scholars have seen Bertha’s helpless turn toward her “self-chosen symbols” (Moran 42) and contemplation of the “immutability of natural beauty in the face of human disaster” (Berkman 107) as undeniably pathetic. And they take Bertha herself—whose celebration of her own supposed good fortune exposes a bourgeois naïveté no self-respecting modernist could abide—to be the definitive target of Mansfield’s irony in “Bliss.”8 But Woolf’s responses to the story, taken together with letters Mansfield had sent her before its composition, suggest that Mansfield did not aim to ridicule her protagonist, but to present in Bertha some yearned-for, re-“Berthed,” fully “ber”—geois version of herself. This alterative self was one not compromised socially and diminished physically by the promiscuous past Mansfield believed had sickened her and precluded motherhood. And it was not
How to Strike a Contemporary

so lonely and impoverished that basic domestic comforts—for which Mansfield often expressed longing in letters—eluded her grasp (Burgan 47–49). Instead, thus betrayed by a cynical Pearl Fulton/Virginia Woolf, Bertha/Mansfield represented an idealized innocent reclaiming strength through a newly discovered capacity to make art.

Like “Bliss”’s Bertha and Pearl, “Katherine” and “Virginia” had, from the beginning of their acquaintance, “really talked,” though each felt there was something mysterious and unknowable about the other. Just as Miss Fulton is a “beautiful woman” with “something strange” about her who can be “wonderfully frank . . . up to a certain point” (Mansfield, Short Stories 342), Virginia Woolf was a renowned inheritor of her mother’s beauty who could also be both blunt and elusive. Mansfield’s letters could be “frank,” too, but were often marked by moments of Bertha-like sentimentality that were rarely evident in Woolf’s vaster semi-private writings. Corresponding with Ottoline the summer before composing “Bliss,” for instance, Mansfield had expressed her sense that Woolf was “VERY delicate.” Though she said she had found her “charming” and “liked her tremendously,” Mansfield could not help but feel the “strange, trembling, glinting quality of her mind” and regard Woolf as “one of those Dostoievsky women whose ‘innocence’”—not unlike Mansfield’s own—“had been hurt.” Just as “Bliss”’s Bertha gazes at Miss Fulton and feels she suddenly “know[es]” her friend is “feeling just what she [is] feeling” during a dinner party, Mansfield explains to Ottoline after having dined with Woolf how she had “decided” “immediately” that she had “understood [Woolf] completely” (Collected Letters 1: 315).

But Mansfield’s letters directly addressed to Woolf prefigure the emotional atmosphere of “Bliss” even more precisely. Planning a visit to Asheham in mid-August 1917, Mansfield assumes a persona much like the one she will bestow upon Bertha six months later, as she exaggerates Woolf’s aloofness while presenting herself as a childlike supplicant. “I should love to come to Asheham on the 17th. Do have me,” she begins, adding just few lines down that she “simply long[s]” to see Woolf—“tell me, may I come & see you . . . whenever it suits you? Oh when may I come [?]” Then granting Woolf the snowy hands she will later give to the silvery white Pearl whose “slender fingers . . . are so pale” that “a light seem[s] to come from them” (346), Mansfield confesses that she had assumed her elder superior’s recent epistolary silence meant she had “finally dispatched [Mansfield] to cruel callous Coventry, without a wave of [her] lily white hand” (Collected Letters 1: 325).
Earlier that summer, Mansfield had similarly presented herself to Woolf as an earnest subordinate using even more emphatic, Bertha-like language than she would in the August letter. Claiming to be “haunted” by her correspondent, Mansfield exclaims cloyingly, “My God I love to think of you, Virginia, as my friend,” before predicting Woolf’s rejection with hyperbolic humility. “Don’t cry me an ardent creature,” she beckons, “or say, with your head a little on one side, smiling as though you knew some enchanting secret: ‘Well, Katherine, we shall see . . . ’” (Collected Letters 1: 313). Rendering herself an “ardent creature” here, Mansfield employs an adjective she will again use repeatedly to describe Bertha when she, after the “moment” with Pearl Fulton, finally, though inarticulately, desires her husband “ardently! ardently!”—“[t]he word ach[ing] in her ardent body!” (Short Stories 348). And her representation of her correspondent speaking condescendingly to her with her “head a little on the side” also anticipates her character-to-be Pearl arriving at the Youngs with “her head a little on one side” (344), before later following Bertha and accepting Harry’s embrace with her head “bent” (346, 349).

Mansfield then continues to entreat Woolf to recognize how “rare it is to find someone with the same passion” she has, someone who “desires to be scrupulously truthful with [her]—to give [her] the freedom of the city without any reserves at all” (Mansfield, Collected Letters 1: 313). Mansfield’s exaggerated language here and emphasis on the word “rare” will reverberate in Bertha’s awkwardly repeated laments about having to keep her passionate body “shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle” (338) and to surrender her daughter to a nurse’s arms as if she, too, were a “rare, rare fiddle” (339). Furthermore, Mansfield’s “rare” assertions will be reflected in Bertha’s speculations about how her “guess[ing]” of “Miss Fulton’s mood so exactly and so instantly” must “happen very, very rarely between women,” and “[n]ever between men” (346).

The scene in “Bliss” that would manifest Mansfield’s exaggerated epistolary effusions from June 1917 most memorably for Woolf, however, is likely the climactic one in which the other guests occupy themselves with the Youngs’ new coffeemaker as Bertha imagines herself and Pearl “caught” in a “circle of unearthly light, understanding each other perfectly, creatures of another world.” As the others drift away into darkness, Bertha becomes conscious that they are standing “side by side” before the “slender, flowering” pear tree that gave her blissful pause as she prepared for the party, and that now “seem[s] like the flame of a candle,” to be “stretch[ing] up,” “point[ing],” “quiver[ing]
in the bright air... grow[ing] taller and taller as they gazed,” and nearly “touch[ing] the rim of the round silver moon” (347).

Reading this striking passage in the summer of 1918, Woolf would surely remember how Mansfield had sketched a similar scene of communion she claimed to have felt in the presence of Woolf and her sister Vanessa in a letter the year before. In Mansfield’s account, Murry and Leonard drift off after dinner, just as the Youngs’ guests do, to inspect the Woolfs’ newest appliance. Where the hand press in Mansfield’s letter is replaced by a coffeemaker in “Bliss,” the three united women are reduced to a pair. Nonetheless, Virginia, Vanessa, and Katherine are drawn together in Mansfield’s missive before a vision composed of elements similar to those that prevail in “Bliss.” “The memory of that last evening is so curious,” Mansfield writes, describing the sisters’ voices hovering in the dark like “white rings of plates floating in the air,” before confessing that she had then imagined “outside the window... a deep dark stream full of silent rushing of little eels with pointed ears going to Norway & coming back” (Collected Letters 1: 313).

Many critics have observed that the masculine “stretch[ing]” tree in “Bliss” reaches significantly toward a feminine moon as if to suggest an androgynous union between Bertha and Pearl symbolized by traditionally anatomized oppositions, but none has noticed the thematic and imagistic—even scientific—kinship this picture shares with Mansfield’s earlier semi-private sketch for Woolf.9 For it is hardly mere coincidence that both pear trees and “little eels” suggest bisexuality. The pear tree is not only marked by its phallic uprightness and feminine-shaped fruits, but, as Helen Nebeker observes, its “‘perfect flowers’” also “contain both male and female organs of propagation” (546). Likewise, not only do Mansfield’s phallus-shaped and sperm-like “silent rushing” eels possess “pointed ears” evocative of feminine arousal, but the reproductive organs of the species remained puzzling to scientists at the time she was writing. As a student of the German language in a London culture increasingly gripped by psychoanalytical fervor, Mansfield was probably aware that Freud himself had searched in vain for the testicles of the eel—or Phallusfisch—before turning his attention to the human psyche and its supposedly incessant phallic fixations in the years that followed.10

Even if these specific male-female significations did not scream out in precisely this way to Woolf, the scene of female-female communion reflected by an androgynous and organic objective correlative looming “outside the window” clearly presages the climactic moment of “Bliss.” If Woolf was merely perplexed by Mansfield’s letter in June 1917, she
probably felt disturbed to see it recast in her friend’s 1918 story. For by rewriting this moment of communion as a prelude to one woman’s betrayal of another, Mansfield apparently wished to show Woolf how she had felt wronged by her.

**Mansfield’s Bogey**

Although Mansfield had dramatically claimed she was “haunted” by Woolf in 1917, it was actually Woolf’s destiny to be haunted by Mansfield in the years ahead. Indeed, Woolf would admit to Vita Sackville-West in 1931 that Mansfield still returned to her in dreams, and her fiction would contain traces of her friend’s influence as well as apparitions of Mansfield long after her death at thirty-four. But while critics have commonly identified these traces most clearly in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Waves*, and *Between the Acts*, they have generally overlooked Mansfield’s quiet, yet fitting, presence in texts that Woolf had originally intended to center on the professional and sexual lives of women—*A Room of One’s Own*, and the novel that emerged from her experimental novel-essay *The Pargiters as The Years*. Whereas Mansfield would be represented in the earlier treatise by Charlotte Brontë and Judith Shakespeare, she would appear in the later novel as Abel Pargiter’s mistress. Though all three of these women were challenged by social limitations during earlier eras, Woolf emphasized in both books how “even now” (*AROO* 49) in the “Present Day” (*Y* 306ff) restrictions on women remained.

To be sure, Woolf would only record her feeling that Mansfield’s letters had been “twisted” (*D* 4: 315) by “illness & Murry” years after memorably deeming Charlotte Brontë’s fiction to have been “deformed and twisted” by rage in *A Room* (69). But it is clear that she had sensed something similar in her friend’s writings years before. And in the *Room*’s portrait of Judith Shakespeare Woolf would make an even more explicit connection between a suffering female artist from the past and her friend who had struggled to establish herself professionally closer to the “present.” Perhaps even troubled by her own negative gossip about the outsider Mansfield’s migration to London, her sexual relations with a man who was not her husband, her formation of an alliance with a selfish man not unlike *Room*’s “Nick Greene,” and her work as an actress, Woolf imagined a more sympathetic portrait of a theatrically inclined Judith Shakespeare facing comparable challenges in the sixteenth century before dying too soon.
Abel Pargiter’s mistress Mira, born centuries after Shakespeare’s sister, seems to have been the product of Woolf’s posthumous sympathy toward Mansfield as well. Like her real-life counterpart who called Murry “Bogey,” Mira refers to her lover as “Bogy.” Also like Mansfield, Mira feels it “her duty . . . to distract” her man (7), and finds herself financially dependent upon him despite her best efforts. Indeed, just as the fictional woman writes her distant partner letters requesting money for washing (9) and roof repairs (222), Mansfield often wrote to Murry from a sickly exile begging him to send support he often failed to provide. Both the fictional Pargiter and the actual Murry also proved to be literal “bogeys”—in Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s sense—obscuring from their lovers’ views “possibilities both real and literary” (188), even in their absence. And both women functioned as more modern “bogey[s] to frighten clever girls with”—counterparts to the seventeenth-century’s Margaret Cavendish, whose “ridiculous” and “distracted” specter, Woolf tells us, kept Dorothy Osborne from writing anything but letters though she had the talent for so much more (AROO 61). For while Gilbert, Gubar, and more recently Anne Fernald have written brilliantly about Woolf’s call in A Room for young women to see past the “goblins,” “evil spirits,” “devils,” or “bogey-men” (Fernald 6–7) of patriarchal life so that they can “put on the body which [Judith Shakespeare] has so often laid down” (AROO 112) and write, they overlook Room’s one female bogey besides Milton’s implied Eve, whose apparition becomes the “opposition . . . in the air” (AROO 62), the “imaginary opponent” (Fernald 6), the “much dreaded . . . bugbear” (Gilbert and Gubar 668n) that inhibits Dorothy Osborne’s vision and convinces her “that to write a book was to be ridiculous, even to show oneself distracted” (AROO 62).12

Like Margaret Cavendish, Mira and Mansfield acquired “reputations” that might make them frightful to women who came after them. And like Dorothy Osborne, both had various bogeys that prevented them from doing much besides writing letters. Mansfield did manage to publish a remarkable amount of work in her short life, but, Woolf knew, her stories often had an epistolary rawness about them, and her novel never materialized. Like Dorothy Osborne, Mansfield, despite the “gift” she had “for the framing of a sentence, for the fashioning of a scene” (AROO 62), never wrote the “book” she might have. Thus, although Woolf herself had allowed Mansfield, at times, to become a bogey in her line of sight and had attempted to “throw down” or figuratively “drink” away that vision with harsh words of gossip, she ultimately realized that it was only through “moral investigation” and
intimate fictional-essayistic reflection on her dead friend’s experience that she could keep her from becoming a bogey for generations of women to come.

Notes

1. I use the word “semi-private” to describe Woolf’s diaries and letters because, as an avid reader and frequent reviewer of the “lives and letters” of previous generations, she certainly expected that her private writings would be published in some form one day—even when she disingenuously told correspondents not to “let [her] views reach the public” (L 2: 515). Here is an incomplete list of scholars who quote or paraphrase Woolf’s “Bliss” comments: Magalaner, Fiction 120ff; Showalter 247; McLaughlin 372n, 380; Meyers 142; Alpers 256; Hanson and Gurr 59; Neaman; Hanson 19, 131n; Dunbar “What Does” 138; Nathan 141; Tomalin 178; Kaplan 146, 148–49; McFall 142, 149n; Burgan 183n; Lee 388; Moran 67; Winston 58–59; Smith 37; and A. Bennett 3.

2. T. S. Eliot’s somewhat positive comments on “Bliss” in After Strange Gods (38) are less often cited than Woolf’s reaction, but his brief discussion of the story guaranteed that continued attention would be paid to her work by his New Critical followers in years to come. By the time Magalaner was writing The Fiction of Katherine Mansfield in 1971, he found Woolf’s diary quotes more useful than Eliot’s remarks as a means for measuring Mansfield’s success, and his reassessment marks the beginning of a trend. See also McLaughlin; Neaman 123; Hanson, 19, 131n; Kaplan 149; Moran 78; Smith 37; Nathan 141; A. Bennett; and Winston 59.

3. Her half-brother’s firm Duckworth & Co. firm published The Voyage Out, and the Woolfs’ own Hogarth Press brought out “The Mark on the Wall.”

4. For Mansfield’s possible influence on “Kew Gardens,” see also Hanson 134n; Kaplan 150, 152–53n; Haller 96–99; Gay 291–92; Daly 114; Staveley 59–62; Dunbar, Radical 185n; and Smith 136–40.

5. These quotations come from the letter Mansfield wrote to Ottoline, not Woolf. Since Mansfield’s letter to Woolf has been lost, critics have generally looked to the similar missive that Mansfield sent to Ottoline to determine its probable contents. That such a letter did exist is confirmed in the note Woolf sent to Ottoline referring to Mansfield’s “romantic” description of Garsington’s garden (L 2: 174). See Alpers 259–61, Haller 96, Gay 291, Staveley 59, and Smith 136–37.

6. I have titled the section in this awkward way to suggest that we consider Bertha Young an aptly named re-“ber”-thed “ber”-geois alter ego for Mansfield herself. After all, Mansfield’s earlier character (and alter ego) Beryl Fairfield (of “Prelude,” and, later, “At the Bay” [1922] and “The Doll’s House” [1922])—a woman “ill” with longing for a “ber”-geois existence—might even be seen a younger version of “Bliss”’s happier, healthier heroine.

7. Magalaner and Nathan, for instance, explicitly read Bertha and Pearl standing before the pear tree as “mesmerize[d]” (Magalaner, Fiction 80) by Harry’s symbolic manhood, “joined worshippers of the phallic flame” (Nathan 75).

8. Nearly every Mansfield scholar concludes that Bertha Young is Mansfield’s ultimate sacrificial lamb in “Bliss.” For further discussion, see Showalter 247–48; Burgan 66; Hanson and Gurr 64–65; Hankin 147; Fullbrook 101; Moran 44; and Daly 73, 77–78.

9. For further discussion on the upright tree, see Magalaner, Fiction 80–81; Dunbar, “What Does” 132; Hankin 146; Fullbrook 101; Burgan 59; and P. Bennett 236.

10. Although Mansfield makes surprisingly few direct references to Freud in her semi-private and published writings, she does curiously seem to allude to what might be his failed early fish studies at one point 1919 (Collected Letters 2: 345). See also P. Bennett 237n, 250.
How to Strike a Contemporary

11. See McLaughlin; Kaplan 80, 115, 148, 152–54; Moran 67–86; Haller; Gay; Winston; and Smith.

12. Gilbert and Gubar do quote Woolf’s reference to “Mad Madge” as “‘the crazy Duchess’” who “‘became a bogey to frighten clever girls with’” (62–63) in A Room, but their focus at that point is on Cavendish’s own self-representational strategies in a patriarchal world of letters rather than on the “bogey” effect she had on the “contemporary” [Dorothy Osborne] who considers her “‘so ridiculous… as to venture at writing book’s… in verse’” (Gilbert and Gubar [quoting Woolf quoting Dorothy Osborne] 544–45).

Works Cited


The Brontë sisters have generated a literary marketplace of their own, which arose almost immediately following the death of Charlotte, in 1855, with Elizabeth Gaskell’s widely read *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857). Virginia Woolf entered that marketplace with her second published work and continued to contribute to its development well into her career. Critical interest in Woolf and the Brontës has mostly followed Woolf’s writings about Charlotte Brontë, in part because Woolf’s statement in *A Room of One’s Own* about Charlotte’s “awkward break” in *Jane Eyre* instigates discussions of Woolf’s approach to anger. 1 Few critics, however, have considered Woolf’s persistent attention to Emily Brontë over the course of her career as an essayist, reviewer, and publisher.

Between the publication of Woolf’s first work of Brontëana—“Haworth, November, 1904”—and *A Room of One’s Own* in 1929, Woolf’s critical approach to the Brontë sisters underwent a dramatic reversal. In that 1904 article, Charlotte is the primary figure of interest. The twenty-three-year-old Woolf noted that she tossed off her early Haworth article for the *Guardian* in “less than 2 hours” (L 1: 158), and in it she cleaves to the main current of opinion that Charlotte was the star Brontë, a broad critical consensus which had held since the sisters’ first appearance in print. By 1925, however, when *The Common Reader* was published, Woolf was arguing for Emily Brontë’s superiority. In 1926 Hogarth Press published C. P. Sanger’s *The Structure of Wuthering Heights*. In the “Preface” to *Orlando* (1928) Woolf thanks Emily, not
Charlotte, for inspiration. *Wuthering Heights* finds a place in Virginia Woolf’s 1929 extended study “Phases of Fiction” (*E 5*: 40–88), but not *Jane Eyre*. The year before, in an omnibus review for the *Nation and Athenaeum*, Leonard Woolf observes, “There was a time, not so very long ago, when the reputation of ‘Wuthering Heights’ was in part reflected from ‘Villette’ and even ‘Jane Eyre,’ and Charlotte was uncontestably the most important member of the family. That is no longer the case” (178). As Woolf herself states in *A Room of One’s Own*, “masterpieces are not single and solitary births, they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind a single voice” (71). Her own critical practices suggest that this statement can apply not only to the moment of production, but also to the history of a work’s reception. Through her own essays and publishing activities, Woolf was purposefully instrumental in initiating a broader critical reappraisal of Emily Brontë.

Woolf deploys Brontë’s position in the literary marketplace in two ways. First, throughout her career Woolf altered and leveraged Emily Brontë’s reputation to explicate her own views on the position of women in that marketplace. Second, Woolf’s consideration of Brontë’s history in the literary marketplace helped her to develop a theory of the potential of emotion, in women’s writing, to effect social change. Woolf first took this interest in Brontë and her work at a time when Brontë’s reputation was beginning to emerge from the condemnatory shadows cast upon it by nineteenth century critics. Pierre Bourdieu argues that “cultural consecration does indeed confer on the objects, persons and situations it touches, a sort of ontological promotion akin to a transubstantiation,” one which rescues those objects from “lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile—in a word, natural—enjoyment” (6–7): that is, from the body and its pleasures, including everyday sensations and emotions (4). As I will discuss below, Brontë’s earliest defenders attempted to promote her consecration in those terms. Woolf’s critical acclamations of Brontë, however, do not fit Bourdieu’s formulation so neatly. Rather, Woolf, as both a pedigreed member of the cultural elite and a writer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, attempted to deploy her own cultural capital to change the terms by which consecration was possible. Woolf’s decision to pair Brontë with Jane Austen in her famous paean in *A Room of One’s Own* is particularly resonant and provocative: “What genius, what integrity it must have required in the face of all that criticism, in the midst of that purely patriarchal society, to hold fast to the thing as they saw it without shrinking. Only Jane
Austen did it and Emily Brontë…. They wrote as women write, not as men write” (AROO 69).

Typically, critics interpret Woolf’s coronation of Jane Austen as the wielder of the feminine line to be a concession: to models of propriety in writing; to the opinions of male critics; to Woolf’s fear of strong emotion, of anger, of passion, which is most frequently illustrated through reference to her criticism of Charlotte Brontë. They also inevitably ignore or gloss over Woolf’s interest in Emily Brontë. The second-wave feminist studies by Adrienne Rich and Elaine Showalter are perhaps the best-known examples of this perspective, but there are more recent examples of this way of thinking about Woolf’s approach to women’s writing. For example, Jane De Gay has argued that Woolf “echoes [George Henry] Lewes in A Room of One’s Own when she praises Austen and Emily Brontë because they ‘wrote as women write, not as men write’” (26). Alison Booth asserts that Woolf “allows Emily and gentle Jane to drop one modifier, ‘woman,’ and add another, ‘great,’ because their artistic manners are self-effacing enough to remain feminine even in greatness. They have no biographies: readers know little about them, and their personal grievances never intrude upon the page” (11). There are two facets to Booth’s argument: she argues that Woolf favors female authors who can “disappear” into their work as a literary practice, and also into a historical context thanks to sheer lack of information about them.

In response to Booth’s second point I would suggest that it is the method of, rather than the opportunity for, biographical criticism to which Woolf objects. Her critical project frequently addresses women authors’ biographies as part of a larger history of women writing. The difficulty, as she observes in “Indiscretions” for Vogue magazine in 1924, is that “critics of the other sex” have set the terms of preference on the basis of their own attraction to female authors’ literary personae (E 3: 460). These preferences are not formed from a lack of knowledge about their favored authors; rather, as Margaret Ezell has argued, during the nineteenth century “without success as a ‘woman,’ a female writer can expect little credit to be given to her writings” (97). Biography sets the terms of approbation.

In essays and letters, Woolf demonstrates a keen awareness that Austen’s value in the literary marketplace was also the source of her vulnerability to sexist misappropriation. Male critics would prefer their tea from Austen, who “as she pours, smiles, charms, appreciates” (E 3: 460). Woolf’s epistolary disagreement with the “Affable Hawk” Desmond McCarthy in the New Statesman was initiated by his assertion
that “‘female novelists should only aspire to excellence by courageously acknowledging the limitations of their sex (Jane Austen [has] demonstrated how gracefully this gesture can be accomplished)’” (qtd. in AROO 68n). Woolf reverses these terms of approbation when she speculates, “perhaps it was the nature of Jane Austen not to want what she had not. Her gift and her circumstances matched each other completely” (AROO 62). Whatever Woolf’s own literary preferences might be, she is clearly aware that to nominate Jane Austen as the only adept of the feminine sentence would be to concede to the limitations that masculine literary criticism frequently imposed upon female writers.

Woolf’s decision to pair Brontë with Austen, then, is in part strategic. For if Austen can at times seem to be too comfortable with her womanly role, Emily Brontë is a widely known example of a writer considered distinctly un-womanly. To understand Brontë’s function in Woolf’s model, as well as Woolf’s renovations to Brontë’s literary reputation, a brief review of earlier critical responses to *Wuthering Heights* and to Brontë herself is useful. Although it is difficult to assert that Woolf was familiar with particular reviews or essays about Emily Brontë, it does seem safe to assume that Woolf kept up with the general trends in criticism of the Brontës; for example, Woolf’s diary entry of 9 March 1925 records George Moore’s “out of date” opinion that “Anne was the greatest of the Brontës” (D 3: 67). For any regular reader of literary criticism during Woolf’s lifetime, knowledge of the reputation of the Brontës would have been nearly inescapable.

From the time of its publication through to the early twentieth century, reviewers generally condemned *Wuthering Heights* on a moral basis while acknowledging its power. Woolf’s Haworth article refers to Elizabeth Gaskell’s bestselling *Life of Charlotte Brontë*; thus even if she had not encountered references to nineteenth-century critical opinions of Emily Brontë in the periodicals, Woolf would have read Gaskell’s own cautious summary of them: “[*Wuthering Heights*] has revolted many readers by the power with which wicked and exceptional characters are depicted. Others, again, have felt the attraction of remarkable genius, even when displayed on grim and terrible criminals” (Gaskell 2: 38). Perhaps more significantly, Woolf would have been familiar with Leslie Stephen’s pronouncement on *Wuthering Heights*, which he called “a kind of baseless nightmare, which we read with wonder and with distressing curiosity, but with far more pain than pleasure or profit” (Stephen 738). In 1918 she reviewed R. Brimley Johnson’s *The Women Novelists*, in which she would have read that Emily Brontë “can scarcely, in character or genius, be accommodated to any ordered consideration of
development” (Johnson 179). This tension between awe at the novel’s power and distress at its unconventional morality will find new form in Woolf’s criticism of *Wuthering Heights* and in her development of a theory of the potential that literature holds for social change, as I will discuss later.

Brontë’s novel elicited wonder and revulsion; her posthumous character acquired a similar veneer. Clement Shorter referred to Emily Brontë as the “sphinx of our modern literature” (2: 1), the least-documentable sister, who left behind only two letters. Brontë’s literary persona was built out of that lack of evidence, as Shorter’s “sphinx” comparison suggests: she was popularly conceived of as being mysterious, pagan, and unique. These qualities could fascinate or repel. Gaskell reported her distaste for a woman who ignored her physical appearance, withdrew from society, and refused to see a doctor in her final illness (2: 94). Gaskell also quoted the statement made by Charlotte and Emily’s Belgian schoolmaster, M. Héger, that Emily “had a head for logic, and a capability of argument, unusual in a man, and rare indeed for a woman”; “‘She should have been a man—a great navigator,’” he famously told Gaskell (1: 205). In her “Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell” Charlotte describes Emily as a woman inside whom “lay a secret power and fire that might have informed the brain and kindled the veins of a hero” (365).

Posthumous criticism of Emily Brontë’s literary output took its cue from these early biographical sketches. Disturbed by the emotions presented in her novel, critics attributed Emily Brontë’s literary achievements to her apparent manliness of thought and feeling. This attribution contributed to the general insistence on Emily’s exceptionality. Her value in the literary marketplace was to define a limit (much as Gertrude Stein would later do for some modernist critics, such as Edmund Wilson in 1931’s *Axel’s Castle*). In the *Cornhill Magazine* of July 1873 George Barnett Smith claims that “a singularly masculine bent of intellect” in Emily led to a novel “which stands as completely alone in the language as does the ‘Paradise Lost’” (65). “B. C. J. D.,” writing in the *Ladies’ Edinburgh Magazine* of October 1878, uses a similar argument to opposite ends when she states that *Wuthering Heights* is “‘a repulsive tale, and that it should have been written by a young woman of seven-and-twenty is a mystery, and a sad one’” (qtd. in Crump 1: 62). Several of Emily Brontë’s defenders feel the need to defend her purity, among them A. C. Swinburne, who in 1883 in the *Athenaæum* insisted on her “passionate and ardent chastity” (Allott 443).
These features of Emily Brontë criticism remained largely unchanged into the early twentieth century. Writing in the *Nation* and *New York Times Book Review* in 1912, G. K. Chesterton asserts (in a review of May Sinclair’s *The Three Brontës*) that *Wuthering Heights* “might have been written by an eagle” and concludes the article with the implication that the choice between Charlotte and Emily is one between faith and atheism. Sinclair herself, who declares Emily the genius of the family, insists that *Wuthering Heights* is “absolutely self-begotten and self-born” (259). Further, Sinclair argues that Emily’s “virile” genius found her “virgin, not only to passion but to the bare idea of passion” (200). As late as 1923, Alice Law attempts to revive the nineteenth-century theory that Branwell wrote *Wuthering Heights* on the basis that “over every page there hangs an unmistakable air of masculinity that cannot be evaded” (156). Law’s opinion was favorably received in the *Times* in early 1924 (“Branwell Brontë”). Thus the prevailing critical portrait of Emily Brontë was of an inexperienced woman estranged from her gender whose works were an aberration in the history of women’s writing (or possibly the product of her brother’s masculine mind). If Austen was the critics’ choice at the tea table, Emily Brontë was banished to the outdoors—even by her defenders.

Woolf’s first attempt to usher Emily Brontë back inside, and to develop a new way of thinking about emotion in fiction, takes place in a *Vogue* magazine article titled “Indiscretions” (1924). Here, Woolf develops her response to Percy Lubbock’s *The Craft of Fiction*, first presented in her essay “On Re-reading Novels” (1922); that development depends upon the critical reputation of Emily Brontë for its impact. In the earlier article, Woolf responds to Lubbock’s use of the word “form” to describe the structure of novels by suggesting that a novel “is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel”; those emotions “form a whole which remains in our minds as the book itself” (*E 3*: 340). Ordered emotion gives the novel its structure. The emotion of the reader can matter as much as the skill of the writer—“both in writing and in reading it is the emotion that must come first” (*E 3*: 341). This idea, that no experience of reading is entirely without affect, is picked up again in “Indiscretions”: the critic has his personal preferences despite his own pretensions to objectivity, “however absolute and austere his devotion to the principle that art has no truck with personality” (*E 3*: 460). Feeling is the central and inescapable fact of literature; and “Indiscretions” builds on this insight to pose the question of whose feelings count. While the male critic is comforted to watch Jane Austen pour his tea, Woolf observes that female readers
have other, yet-unexplored loves: “Some obscurity still veils the relations of women to each other” (E 3: 462). This hidden territory Woolf rather ironically, but also suggestively, calls the “harem”—the realm absent male critics, where female readers and writers, still framed by a masculine discourse, may sometimes be left alone to talk.

It is here, in the harem with the women, that Woolf places Emily Brontë. By reclaiming Brontë as a female writer, rather than placing her among her list of the sexless as previous critics might be expected to do, Woolf opens the field of texts to literary pleasures different from those a male critic might prize—and quite different from the “pure envy” which that critic might expect to exist between women. The relations she describes in this “harem” are varied: Mrs. Gaskell is a mother figure, George Eliot an “inimitable” aunt. The relation that most startlingly breaks the circle of charmed critic and charming author at tea, however, is that between the reader and Emily Brontë: Woolf declares that for the woman reader, “Emily Brontë was the passion of her youth” (E 3: 462). This phrase substitutes for domesticated teatime enjoyments more intensely pleasurable relations, located beyond the bounds of conventional propriety. Framing Brontë as the object of a young woman’s “passion,” Woolf plays with the usual critical tendencies to read Brontë as either virginal and ignorant, or corrupt and corrupting. Instead, Woolf suggestively places Brontë in the position of an initiator, a significant if still ambiguous influence in a young woman’s development of feeling. As Woolf later observes, “we learn through feeling” (E 5: 581). Woolf thus uses Brontë to expand the range of emotion granted to young women, beyond even those underrepresented relations of mothers and aunts and daughters and sisters; thus, too, she expands the range of feeling in the realm of literature itself.

This idea of the transmission of feeling from author to reader informs Woolf’s first extended discussion of Emily Brontë, which appears in The Common Reader in 1925, in “Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights.” Brontë’s novel is particularly useful to Woolf because it allows her to develop her idea, first articulated in “On Re-reading Novels,” that if the writer’s feeling was “intense” (E 3: 340) the emotions presented in the novel would generate both coherence and structure. The transmission of that framework or system of feeling is what keeps a novel alive through the passage of time. Determining just how this transmission takes place can be difficult. In “How it Strikes a Contemporary,” the essay that concludes The Common Reader, Woolf states that the author’s earnest belief in his or her worldview is necessary to “make people a hundred years later feel the same thing” (E 4: 239). But in
“Character in Fiction” she uses the opposite claim to support her assertion that human nature has changed: “Do you ask for more solemn instances of the power of the human race to change? Read the Agamemnon, and see whether, in process of time, your sympathies are not almost entirely with Clytemnestra” (E 3: 422). At the risk of imposing coherence on a theory that Woolf herself may not have fully worked out, it might be reasonable to suggest that for Woolf, implicit belief and intense feeling were necessary to, but no guarantee of, literary permanence, and that their effectiveness depended on the possibility of the reader feeling his or her way into a system of belief which might differ from his or her own. In her 1923 review of Dorothy Richardson’s Revolving Lights Woolf stresses that “the heart is not, as we should like it to be, a stationary body, but a body which moves perpetually, and is thus always standing in a new relation to the emotions which are its sun” (E 3: 367). Human emotions themselves might be stable through the course of history, but their manifestation in lived experience will always be contextual, at times to the point of illegibility or complete reversal.

Wuthering Heights fits this theory in revealing ways. The novel had been damned for its dubious moral content but praised for its power; Victorian readers had felt themselves moved despite their best intentions. In “Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights” Woolf examines the ways the Brontë novels manage to evade barriers to sympathy: those which the passage of time can impose, but also those which may be erected by convention or propriety. She argues that the Brontës are among the writers who possess “an overpowering personality” (E 4: 168), those novelists “whose very ardour, rejecting half shades and other minor impediments, wings its way past the daily conduct of ordinary people and allies itself with their more inarticulate passion. It makes them poets” (E 4: 168). If we read the trajectory of this ardor as the movement of emotion from author to reader, then the “poetic” school of fiction, with its ability to access the “inarticulate passions” buried behind the “daily conduct of ordinary people,” has the potential to move readers in ways that disturb the surface of conventional behaviors and beliefs. The ardor of the writer of “overpowering personality” affects the reader’s emotions in ways that he or she may not anticipate.

Woolf is suggesting that these writers have the power to make people feel an idea, to allow it to inhabit their emotions, and not only their thought. This might seem to have Eliotic echoes, but Woolf means something other than healing an acute dissociation of sensibility.
Where Eliot claims that feeling “became more crude” following the purported mid-eighteenth-century dissociation, and requires thought for refinement (64), Woolf rather contends that thought requires feeling for potency and efficacy. Thoughts can only take root in socially and culturally meaningful ways when people begin to feel them; that is how we “learn through feeling.” Emotions that might prompt social change cannot be delivered to the reader only as an incidental byproduct of an intellectual argument, as in Charlotte Brontë’s “awkward break,” because placing the emphasis on thought invites the reader to engage with the accompanying emotions intellectually, rather than to experience them. Instead, such emotions must be presented poetically. When they conflict with a reader’s social and cultural expectations, yet reach a reader as an experience integral to the ideas or thoughts that generate them, the resulting tension might generate reviews such as those which *Wuthering Heights* continued to receive well into Woolf’s day—vacillating between moral outrage and grudging confessions of its power.

Woolf’s critical thinking about Emily Brontë’s literary practices reaches its final iteration in 1929, both in “Phases of Fiction” and in *A Room of One’s Own*. Woolf’s treatment of Brontë in *A Room* relies on her revisions of Brontë’s literary persona over the course of the previous decade. All the qualities and habits that estranged Emily Brontë from her Victorian and Edwardian critics are called into question when, in *A Room*, Woolf remarks,

> What genius, what integrity it must have required in the face of all that criticism, in the midst of that purely patriarchal society, to hold fast to the thing as they saw it without shrinking. Only Jane Austen did it and Emily Brontë…. They wrote as women write, not as men write…. [T]hey alone entirely ignored the perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue—write this, think that…. One must have been something of a firebrand to say to oneself, Oh, but they can’t buy literature too…. Lock up your libraries if you like: but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind. (69)

By the middle of this passage, Emily Brontë has taken over the voice of the female writer. The reader can more readily imagine the sequestered and passionate Brontë as a firebrand than the detached, ironic Austen—Woolf herself called her the “heroic woman” (*D* 1: 184). Brontë had famously ignored the “eternal pedagogue” in the form of M. Héger.
Gates, locks, and bolts pervade her poetry. This passage’s grammatical structure, however, attributes these thoughts and qualities to both Austen and Brontë, and that double-voiced unison is significant.

By pairing Brontë with Austen as women who “wrote as women write,” Woolf contradicts the history of critical discourse that attributed Brontë’s gifts to her ability to think like a man. By mingling the voices of Austen and Brontë, she refutes the tendency to read Brontë as a passive, naïve vessel of genius, and instead claims her for a tradition of conscious revolt against the restrictions of her society. Too, Austen comes to seem more daring, more intensely satirical, not so comforting at her tea table. Yet Woolf can still play with the poles these two authors represent in the public’s mind—the demure but sociable and perspicacious Austen versus the fierce, solitary, passionate Brontë—to expand the range of roles for women to inhabit.

The poles they represent have a relationship to the theory of emotion that Woolf had been developing during her decade-long consideration of Brontë. Here I return to Booth’s first point, that the pairing of Emily Brontë and Jane Austen favors writers who have “self-effacing” artistic manners. This assertion does seem to accord with Woolf’s attitude toward Austen’s fiction; in *A Room of One’s Own* Woolf compares Austen’s work to that of Shakespeare, stating that both disappear into their work (62); both are practitioners of the literary impersonality that Woolf approved over the course of her literary career. Emily Brontë, however, does not seem to sit so easily in this company. When Woolf compares Austen to Brontë, she highlights their differences, stating that Austen’s “was not a prolific genius; she had not, like Emily Brontë, merely to open the door to make herself felt” (*E*: 150). The Brontë sisters are, after all, writers of “overpowering personality” (*E*: 158), rather than impersonality. For Woolf, however, both poetics—the personal and the impersonal—are complementary halves of a larger picture.

According to Woolf, Lisa Low states, Austen and Shakespeare “were able to get those whole of themselves into what they wrote” and thus “they vanished completely, leaving no trace” (268); in impersonal literature, “personality is sublimed” with the result that “one gets all personality, the ur-human, a mirror in which every human being can see him or herself” (268). Woolf’s impersonality, therefore, is not an abandonment of the dangers of female identity, but an attempt to “become common” (265). I would like to develop and slightly amend Low’s assertion. If, in Low’s richly suggestive phrase, this “sublimed” personality implies access to a shared human experience, then rather
than access to a permanent, ahistorical “ur-human,” it implies absorption of the reader into the writer’s perspective so complete and undisturbed the reader inhabits that sublimed personality. In “How it Strikes a Contemporary” Woolf writes that “[t]o believe that your impressions hold good for others is to be released from the cramp and confinement of personality”; this belief will “make people a hundred years later feel the same thing,” because such belief allows the writer to order the elements of his or her narrative into a coherent whole of relations (E 4: 239). In impersonal fiction, the novel’s structure of emotion comes to the reader through the author’s ordered thoughts; Woolf associates belief with the intellect (E 4: 240). This is not to suggest that thought is detachable from feeling, but rather that the author’s belief in a particular set of “relations of human beings towards each other and towards the universe” (E 4: 239) provides a set of emotional proportions into which the reader might easily enter. Thus it is that, despite their invisibility in the text, “Jane Austen pervades every word that she wrote, and so does Shakespeare” (AROO 62); thus some examples of “impersonal” literature may yet become uninhabitable by some readers (as with the Agamemnon); and thus, too, Woolfian impersonality is not quite so “self-effacing” as it might seem. It is the reader, not the writer, who disappears.

The difficulty, however, is that while impersonal texts may manage to subsume personality by enveloping the reader completely in the writer’s perspective—without the “awkward break” which draws attention to the exterior of that point of view—still, that point of view will have historically and culturally specific limitations. Always there is the question of which beliefs, whose coherent whole of relations, will be presented on the page. Here is where the novelists of personality, such as Emily Brontë, can complement the work of impersonal female writers. If Austen’s impersonal “belief” in a system of relations creates a structure of emotion for her reader, Brontë’s “superb conviction” does something similar, not through faith in a given social structure, but through the ordering of her own emotions into a pattern; thus she is able to amplify the range of emotions with which writers following her may work. In “Phases of Fiction” Woolf poses to novelists a challenge: “The novel, it is agreed, can follow life; it can amass details. But can it also select? Can it symbolize? Can it give us an epitome as well as an inventory?” (CE 2: 102). Woolf includes Emily Brontë among those who are able to provide that epitome when she asserts that Brontë has achieved a vision of “larger men and women, of other symbols and significances” beyond, or rather through, the characters and images of the
book itself (CE 2: 96). Thus Brontë, too, achieves a sublime of personality. Impersonal and personal writers are in this way complementary; a writer such as Austen can consolidate and perfect the gains made by writers of Brontë’s type. Austen makes order for emotion; Brontë makes us feel emotion, even unfamiliar emotion, as order.

Austen and Brontë represent two poles of women’s writing in one other significant way. If in *A Room of One’s Own* Austen represents the female writer whose gift was most perfectly realized, Woolf implies that the greatest unfulfilled promise belonged to Emily Brontë. Throughout the extended essay a sense of melancholy, of loss, regularly attends her mention. Perhaps this is inevitable, given Brontë’s brief life and small output. But the loss recorded is more specifically for a woman who could counter the claims of “old gentlemen” that “[w]omen cannot write the plays of Shakespeare” (*AROO* 42). Woolf argues that although “genius like Shakespeare’s is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people” such as women have been, “[n]ow and again an Emily Brontë . . . blazes out” and proves the possibility of such genius in women (44). It is she who should have written “poetic plays,” perhaps as Judith Shakespeare would have done (61). Again, Woolf is pulling at a thread in Emily Brontë criticism. She was not the first to draw a comparison between Emily Brontë and William Shakespeare. If Woolf made a habit of speaking the names of Shakespeare and Jane Austen in the same breath, critics had been doing the same for Emily Brontë for decades. Sydney Dobell’s famous *Palladium* review (Allott 57–59) first makes the comparison between characters in *Wuthering Heights* and the works of Shakespeare. This comparison was frequently reiterated by those who argued for *Wuthering Heights*’s literary value. In an article in the *Westminster Review* of August 1898, Angus McKay effervesces that “if we look only to the quality of the imagination displayed in *Wuthering Heights*—its power, its intensity, its absolute originality—it is scarcely too much to say of Emily that she might have been Shakespeare’s youngest sister” (217). These early comparisons suggested Brontë’s exceptionality; Woolf deploys the Shakespeare comparison rather to position Brontë as the missing apex of the still-developing canon of literature written by women. By positioning Brontë as one of the foremothers who may help “the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister [to] put on the body which she has so often laid down” (*AROO* 102), Woolf instills in her a new literary value: she becomes a prophet and martyr of women’s literature, one whose personal vision both anticipates and helps to shape a public prepared to read whatever a woman would write.
Notes

1. See Showalter and Long. See also Rich, who uses Woolf’s dismissal of Jane Eyre’s emotional textures to discuss the importance of Jane Eyre’s anger (106).

2. Later critics echo Leonard Woolf’s observation. R. C. W. Crump, in her introduction to the first volume of her Brontë bibliography, traces a pattern of critical opinion that acclaims Charlotte for the first seventy or so years after her death in 1855, before it shifts in favor of Emily (1: x). See also Winnifrith.

Works Cited


As a result of Edith Sitwell’s encouragement and enthusiasm, Gertrude Stein agreed to lecture at Cambridge and Oxford in June 1926. In the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, her delivery of “Composition as Explanation” is presented as a triumph; Stein wittily responds to two men who jump up and down, asking her questions in quick succession after the lecture. “You say that everything being the same everything is always different, how can that be so,” one man says. Stein responds: “Consider . . . the two of you, you jump up one after the other, that is the same thing and surely you admit that the two of you are always different.” “Touchez,” he replies. Edith and Osbert Sitwell were, according to Alice B. Toklas, “delighted with the lecture” and her “good humor” in the question-answer session. As if to confirm the significance of the lectures, Alice then reports that “Leonard Woolf some months after this published Composition as Explanation in the Hogarth Essay Series. It was also printed in the Dial” (254).

This is the only mention of the Woolfs in the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, a memoir that could be characterized as a virtual catalogue of modernist writers, with memorable, if brief, references to James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Robert McAlmon, Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy, André Gide, Lytton Strachey, and more. There is no mention of Virginia Woolf. Yet, Woolf attended Edith Sitwell’s tea for Stein following the 1926 Cambridge lecture. We
Karen Leck

know this, because she wrote an anti-Semitic letter to Vanessa on 2 June about the occasion:

Jews swarmed. It was in honour of Miss Gertrude Stein who was throned on a broken settee (all Edith’s furniture is derelict). . . . She contradicts all you say; insists that she is not only the most intelligible, but also the most popular of living writers; and in particular despises all of English birth. Leonard, being a Jew himself, got on very well with her. But it was an anxious, exacerbating affair. (L 3: 269–70)

Woolf’s hostile reaction to Stein, I will argue, is the result of a connection that she imagined between Stein’s Jewish identity and her proud assertion that she was “the most popular of living writers.” This letter reveals the relationship Woolf explores elsewhere, most prominently in Flush, The Years and the short story, “The Duchess and the Jeweller,” between Jewishness and intellectual prostitution, or to put it another way, writing for money. Although it was not at all true that Stein was “the most popular of living writers” in 1926, Stein's ambition to be such a person was, to Woolf, quintessentially Jewish.

Woolf, of course, was profoundly engaged with the problem of artistic freedom, most eloquently explored in A Room of One’s Own. “I’m the only woman in England free to write what I like,” she declared as she considered the independence that the Hogarth Press gave her (D 3: 43). She was not always sympathetic to those who did not have this freedom, however. Julia Briggs observes that Woolf “could afford to adopt the moral high ground when it came to writing and had been able to do so from the start because she had a small private income. When she sneered at Storm Jameson for being an ‘old Prostitute’—that is, writing for money—she forgot that her unearned income gave her a safety net that Jameson lacked” (329). Yet, Woolf did on several notable occasions (especially with the publications of Flush and The Years) find herself characterized as a writer who was interested in attracting a large audience, as an advertisement for Flush in Publishers’ Weekly made clear in 1933: “Mrs. Woolf has done it this time—written a book of exquisite beauty and charm that will quadruple her market” (Flush). It is no accident that the figure of the Jew recurs in works where Woolf courted a more mainstream audience and popular success, or investigated the hazards of earning an income from writing through the lives of her characters. Indeed, Woolf’s anti-Semitic characterizations of Jews consistently appear in works where she was most consciously concerned
with her mainstream reception and the income she might earn as a result of this success.

The relationship between Woolf’s concern about the economics of publishing and the financial negotiations of her Jewish characters can be seen most obviously in “The Duchess and the Jeweller.” As Leena Schröder has shown, Woolf was forced to negotiate a financial agreement with the editors of the middlebrow Harper’s Bazaar, where the story eventually appeared in both the American and British editions in 1938. Furthermore, as Phyllis Lassner observes, Woolf’s New York agent required her to make the story less obviously about Jews “because of widespread racial prejudice in America” (D 5: 107). Consequently Woolf changed the protagonist’s name from Isidore Oliver to Oliver Bacon, took out the word “Jew” in a reference to him in childhood as “a little Jew boy” and changed a description of “crowds of Jewesses, beautiful women, with their false pearls, with their false hair” to “crowds” (Lassner 97). It is unlikely that readers would not have assumed Bacon was Jewish, however, since there are references to his boyhood in the East End, his Jeweller apprenticeship in Hatton Garden, and Woolf’s exaggerated and stereotypical description of Bacon’s nose: “long and flexible, like an elephant’s trunk” with a “curious quiver at the nostrils” (243). In addition to submitting to these editorial suggestions, Woolf also found herself in the unfamiliar position of negotiating a contract for this work, a subject which she discussed with Vanessa, who thought that her sister should request that the “money is paid beforehand” (L 6: 191; qtd. in Schröder 303). That is, in this economic transaction, both Vanessa and Virginia adapted a shrewd persona in order to sell this story to a popular magazine—a story that, not at all incidentally, is about an enormously successful Jewish Jeweller (“the richest jeweler in England”) who consciously allows himself to be swindled by a vulgar Duchess in order to attain a certain social status that is otherwise unavailable to him. The Duchess invites him to meet the Prime Minister (and, most important, to socialize with her daughter) and, as a result, the Jeweller betrays his usual sound economic judgment, or his “characteristic” Jewish identity (as Woolf presents it), just as Woolf betrays her usual commitment to intellectual freedom and becomes “the Jew” in her own financial negotiation.

It might appear that the figure of the financially savvy Jew is absent from Woolf’s bestselling Flush, even if this book was also deliberately written as a less serious book for the common reader. But Flush, too, includes a thinly veiled reference to the threat of Jews, one made clear when the novel is compared to “The Duchess and the Jeweller.” As Anna Snaith observes, in that story, Oliver Bacon recalls that in his
childhood “the height of his ambition” had been “selling stolen dogs
to the fashionable women of Whitechapel” (627). At the conclusion
of the story, when he realizes that the Duchess has, just as he feared,
sold him imitation pearls, he again thinks of himself as a “little boy
in the alley where they sold dogs on Sunday” (in the early version, of
course, he had been a “little Jew boy”) (101). In Flush, Elizabeth Barrett
Browning’s dog is abducted by a man named Mr. Taylor in Whitechapel
for ransom. At this time, Whitechapel was primarily known for two
things: the extreme poverty of the Jewish immigrants who lived there,
and the prostitution that resulted from economic necessity. It was the
prostitutes of Whitechapel who were terrorized by Jack the Ripper
in the 1880s. Snaith reports that “[i]n 1840 there were an estimated
12,000–13,000 Jews in Whitechapel and by 1914, subsequent to the
mass immigration of Russian Jews to London following the pogroms,
there were 200,000.” Furthermore, “From the arrival of Jews into the
East End of London from the 1880s onwards, they were linked to fears
of degeneracy” (627, 630).

The story of Flush’s capture is actually the story of a writer who is
usually removed from economic concerns, Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
but is forced to enter into financial negotiations with a Jewish-inflected
character in an area plagued by prostitution in order to recover her
beloved dog. Taylor, of course is not a Jewish name; instead, Woolf
relies on the stereotype of the Jewish tailor to identify his ethnicity by
using this unsubtle pun. Taylor, powerful and prosperous, is “the head
of the gang,” and “was said to make an income of two or three thou-
sand a year out of the dogs of Wimpole Street” (42). If we doubt that
Woolf associated Whitechapel with Jews, we only need consider her
anti-Semitic reaction to Philip Sassoon, Siegfried’s cousin: she called
him “an underbred Whitechapel Jew” (Mount 13). Sassoon was not
only objectionable because he was Jewish; he was unabashedly inter-
ested in establishing relationships with celebrities, inviting them to his
outrageous “postmodern” home for weekends. It should be no sur-
prise that the Woolfs declined Sasson’s invitation, which suggested that
Woolf’s intellectual reputation had become overshadowed by her own
celebrity and popularity (Mount 13).

Barrett Browning’s decision to pay the ransom and recover Flush
is an act of rebellion against both her father and Robert Browning,
who argue that her complicity will not only encourage the crimi-
nals, but also disregards the ethics of the men who control her. “If she
went to Whitechapel she was siding against Robert Browning and in
favour of fathers, brothers and domineers in general” (F 49). Paying the
money and recovering the dog is presented as the desirable and ethical compromise, precisely because this act contradicts the usual conduct of Wimpole Street and its patriarchal values, which are shown to be predicated on arbitrary and cruel class distinctions: “Her father and her brother were in league against her and were capable of any treachery in the interests of their class” (47). The financial relationship between Whitechapel and Wimpole Street is made explicit: “Mixed up with that respectability was this squalor.... St. Giles's stole what St. Giles's could; Wimpole Street paid what Wimpole Street must” (41, 42). This oppressive dependency is exposed as a manmade and finally unbearable one when Barrett Browning escapes to Italy with Robert, andFlush is finally allowed to run free with dogs from all backgrounds; indeed, Flush’s happiness is the result of the meaninglessness of his pedigree in this new setting. No longer a part of corrupt, commercial London, the Brownings and Flush are released to be intellectually and socially free.

As Woolf was writing about the freedoms and constraints that Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Flush faced, she considered the economic role of the book in her own life. As Pamela Caughie observes, a letter by Woolf to Vita Sackville-West suggests that in addition to writing this parodic biography as a joke for Lytton Strachey, Woolf deliberately wrote the book to make money: “[With Flush] I hope to stem the ruin we shall suffer from the failure of the Waves. This is the worst publishing season on record. No bookseller dares buy’” (L 4: 380; qtd. in Caughie 149). As she continued to work on the “silly” book, it became more and more of a chore and burden, as her diary makes clear.

The ambivalence Woolf expressed about the success of Flush further reveals her inability to reconcile “popularity” with her artistic identity. Anticipating the book’s reception, Woolf wrote that “Flush will be out on Thursday & I shall be very much depressed, I think by the kind of praise. They’ll say its ‘charming’ delicate, ladylike. And it will be popular.... I shall very much dislike the popular success of Flush” (D 4: 181). This correct prediction of Flush’s reviews, however, was preceded by reflections on the consequences of the book’s probable financial success. Woolf noted when traveling in Vienna in May of 1933 that she “read another letter & learn[ed] that the Book Society will probably take Flush, & speculate what we shall do if we have 1,000 or 2,000 to spend” (D 4: 160). Woolf’s accurate calculation of the book’s financial success soon was overtaken by the realization that these economic rewards might bring about an unwanted byproduct: popularity. Apparently alarmed by the likelihood of not
just popularity, but popularity in the United States, she wrote: “And I forgot to say that Flush has been chosen by the American Book Society. Lord!” (D 4: 175) Surely Woolf’s negative reaction to Gertrude Stein was partly motivated by her prejudice against the American culture that both produced and was celebrated by Stein: a vulgar, materialistic culture as Woolf understood it. As Caughie observes, “Woolf feared becoming... a figure bred by popularity” (151).

Yet, the personal effects of Woolf’s increased financial resources were satisfying. Not at all removed from material concerns, she noted that “L. is having the new pond made, the old one re-grouted, & is going to pave the front garden. Flush, I think with some pleasure, has made these extravagances possible. We should net 2,000 from that six months dogged & dreary grind” (D 4: 176). The dialectical, economic relationship between Whitechapel and Wimpole Street is thus familiar to Woolf, and can be seen as a rewriting of the economic concerns she faced when considering Flush’s role in affecting and defining both her personal finances and public persona. As Susan Squier shows, Wimpole Street and Whitechapel are linked by “mutual economic dependence” (127). In Woolf’s novel, Whitechapel throws “doubts upon the solidity even of Wimpole Street itself” (39). Flush too made Woolf doubt the solidity of her own identity as a serious writer, even as her public reputation and economic success enabled her career.

Flush has been dismissed by critics (and even by Woolf) as an unse-rious book, although it does show her real concern with problems of economic dependence and intellectual corruption. As Julia Briggs notes, “Flush, perhaps with Night and Day, has become Woolf’s most neglected fiction, and her own insistence that it was intended as a joke seems to have put off more readers than it has attracted” (300). Before she completed Flush, Woolf was inspired by the idea of a new, signifi-cant work that would go further, dramatizing more clearly the problems of intellectual freedom for women only suggested in Flush. Woolf recorded her first thoughts about The Years in her diary in January 1931, noting with enthusiasm, “I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book—a sequel to a Room of Ones Own—about the sexual life of women: to be called Professions for Women perhaps—Lord how exciting!” (D 4: 6).

Woolf’s bath time inspiration, and her consciousness that she had the valuable freedom to consider a new, intellectual project at her lei-sure, can be directly contrasted with Sara’s repulsion at her own bath-ing options in The Years, which are directly linked to her intellectual
and artistic limitations. Sara listens to her cousin, North, read Andrew Marvell’s “The Garden,” when they are interrupted by the sound of Sara’s neighbor running his bath.

“The Jew?” he said. They listened…. 
“The Jew having a bath,” she said.
“The Jew having a bath?” he repeated. 
“And tomorrow there’ll be a line of grease round the bath,” she said.
“Damn the Jew!” he exclaimed. (339)

Sara promptly confesses that her proximity to Abrahmson, “the Jew,” nearly motivated her to find employment in a newspaper office. North is intrigued by the new knowledge that Sara might need to “earn her living,” an option that repels Sara and apparently would bring about a certain corruption of her values. Woolf deliberately chooses journalism as Sara’s possible career, writing for money, the equivalent, to Woolf, of intellectual prostitution. Yet, this artistic corruption would save her from the Jew in her apartment building by giving her enough income to move to a better neighborhood. She must accept the literal presence of the Jew, or take on characteristics that Woolf, at least, specifically associates with the Jew.

Christine Froula argues that Woolf’s first idea for the title of The Years, “The Sexual Life of Women,” further reveals that “Woolf conceives a book whose high-spirited title marks women’s historic transition from ‘the oldest profession,’ prostitution—the then current connotation of ‘public women’—and marriage (continuous with prostitution in a socioeconomic system that excludes women from public life) into professions until recently restricted to men” (215). That is, Woolf’s initial inspiration was intimately concerned with the ways women have been prostituted in the past, and how the present day offers new and better options. But Sara’s example shows that access to certain professions can bring about another, modern kind of intellectual prostitution that is also undesirable. Her attempt to remain uncorrupted, however, has negative consequences, and Sara is not an idealized character. As Grace Radin suggests, Sara thinks that “if she refuses everything that society has to offer, she reasons, she can remain uncommitted to its values…. [But] the price she pays for her refusal to participate is poverty, loneliness, and helplessness in the face of impending events” (60). Indeed, the price she pays is “the Jew in the
bath.” As Tracy Hargreaves argues, “Woolf appears to be conflating anti-Semitic discourses of the Jew with her exasperation about the professional positions and possibilities open to women in the first decades of the twentieth century who are bereft of their 500 per annum and a room of their own” (189).

Although the scene with “the Jew in the bath” has attracted some attention from critics, *The Years* contains numerous references to Jews that have received less attention, as Hargreaves notes (186). In 1880, Eleanor does volunteer work for the poor, and tells her family stories of the Levys, Mrs. Levy in particular: “The old Jewess sitting up in bed in her hot little room . . .” (31). At Hyde Park, in 1914, Sara and Martin hear a speaker say: “‘Don’t be afraid. . . . [D]o I look like a Jew?’” (240) Descriptions of Edward’s experiences at Oxford in 1880 include two casual references to “the clever little Jew-boy from Birmingham” (49, 63). These different examples suggest that the presence of Jews not only reveals, but also causes or is a catalyst for the new and changing marketplace that England has become, implicitly threatening the old order, as the Hyde Park speaker warns. Eleanor is able to take advantage of the poverty of some Jews in order to make her own life more fulfilling in 1880, expanding the role of women in useful ways, but her brother’s experience with Jews is apparently different. He must compete with them at Oxford, and corrupt the pure, intellectual joy of his academic experience, which now has an acknowledged market value. Socially mobile Jews are shown to be a threat to the masculine, idealized cultural tradition which now must come to terms with the effects of a destabilized class system.

Another important example of the Jew in *The Years* is Nicholas, who in early drafts of the novel was Jewish, and, as Maren Linett has shown, was Sara’s lover. (In the final version, Nicholas is homosexual.) Phyllis Lassner has suggested that Sara’s attitude toward Jews expressed in her conversation with North represent Woolf’s “character’s prejudices rather than her own” but there is evidence that Sara (Elvira in *The Pargiters*) was first “an autobiographical artist-figure” (Lassner 135; Froula 241). It is not just Sara’s resistance to become a journalist and to corrupt her values by submitting to this intellectual prostitution, but her relationship to this Jewish man that makes the connection with Woolf clear. Indeed, Woolf noted in her diary, “I hardly know which I am, or where: Virginia or Elvira; in the Pargiters or outside” (D 4: 148). Woolf’s often cited prejudicial reaction to her husband suggests that she had not reconciled her choice to share her own bath with a Jew: “How I hated marrying a Jew…. [H]ow I hated their nasal voices & their oriental jewellery and
their noses and their wattles,” she wrote to Ethel Smyth in 1930. The Jews who surround Sara seem to be responsible for insidious problems with the contemporary world that Woolf fears, such as the disagreeable possibilities for women in the workplace which require intellectual prostitution.

In the final version of *The Years*, however, Nicholas is not clearly identified as Jewish. When Eleanor first meets Nicholas she wonders if he is “Russian, Polish, Jewish?” Once Nicholas becomes a close family friend, however, Eleanor and Sara refer to him as “Brown” rather than by his Jewish-sounding Polish surname (282, 309). Sara’s close friendship with Nicholas is shown to disturb some of the other characters, but his role as a threat to her freedom is erased. Instead, as a homosexual, he is transformed into another outsider who, with Sara, attempts to avoid complicity with the dominant culture. This significant difference is only one of Woolf’s revisions that alters the implications of the book. As Grace Radin has observed, much of the social criticism and commentary about the possibilities for women were eliminated; consequently, *The Years* is much less politically charged than *The Pargiters*.

Indeed, Radin is disappointed with *The Years*. Woolf wrote to herself that “this book is important. Why do I feel this, & I never felt it in the least about the others?” (*D* 4: 130). Yet her ambitious goals for the novel were almost invisible to readers, who could not be blamed for failing to see that she had deliberately dramatized certain possibilities and limitations for women in order to analyze the social and professional opportunities available to them without including direct commentary about this gender-defined landscape. Radin concludes, “The differences between her first draft and her novel reveal that there had come a moment when her courage failed,” and she is certainly correct that *The Years* fails to offer a clear critique of the “important” historical picture she describes (35). Her representations of women do reveal many of the compromises and disappointing options that women could expect in the past and present, but much of her pointed political commentary was lost in the later version.

Woolf not only dramatized the problem of writing for money through the character of Sara. As she wrote *The Years*, she “worried not only about its art, but also its economics. In entry after entry of her diary she calculated how much money she had left from her earnings and how much time she could continue to spend revising the troublesome book” (Fromm 304). Like Woolf’s other works in which the figure of the Jew recurs, *The Years* was a book in which the economic concerns
in her own life are reflected or transformed in the experiences of her characters, who must negotiate the negative influence of Jewish characters. Fromm speculates that Woolf’s uncharacteristic choice, which is “made much of by some of the critics,” to wait until she had received the galleys from the printer to show Leonard the book was simply a way of “saving time” when she was so concerned with speeding up the release date in order to generate income more quickly (304). It may also be that she was wary of showing her Jewish husband this book, which suggested that Jews were a direct threat to the intellectual freedom of non-Jews.

Certainly, the revisions reflect Woolf’s own struggle with Sara’s problem. Woolf consciously attempted to include “ideas” without “preaching,” as she put it in her diary, and was conscious of her readers throughout the writing process. Her revisions show her choice to make the book appealing to wide audience. As she attempted to ensure that The Years did not alienate readers, she was, of course, bowing to the market. And, indeed, the book was a great success with mainstream audiences. The Years was a bestseller in Britain and the United States; in the United States it was so popular that Woolf’s face appeared on the cover of Time magazine in April 1937.

Woolf was not the only female modernist to appear on the cover of Time, of course. Gertrude Stein, who indeed became one of “the most popular of living writers” when The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas was serialized in the Atlantic Monthly and then became a run-away bestseller in the fall of 1933, also appeared there. The distinction of appearing on the cover of Time was not the only connection between the two writers. Flush had been serialized in some of the same issues of the Atlantic Monthly in which Gertrude Stein’s Autobiography appeared; both books were published by Harcourt, Brace in the United States, were reviewed together in the Atlantic, and were even advertised together, rather surprisingly, as examples of “outstanding biography” in December 1933. Both became bestsellers. Neither book was directly about the relationship between Jews and popular art, but both clearly were most profoundly concerned with this subject. Gertrude Stein had finally become one of “the most popular of living writers,” a distinction she shared with Virginia Woolf; but unlike Woolf, Stein not only courted this popularity but delighted in her new ability to make money. During her celebrated 1934–1935 American lecture tour, the Washington Post noted that:

Gertrude Stein...is undoubtedly the most popular and accepted visitor New York has had this winter.... She is certainly an attractive
old lady...[with] a grand, infectious laugh and a well-developed sense of humor. When some one asks her, “Did you write the autobiography of Alice B. Toklas as a literary concession?” and she answers, “I never concede. I wrote it to make a heck of a lot of money,” the effect is irresistible. (Renaud 9)

During World War II, connections between Woolf and Stein were more disturbing, as the women were both potential victims of Hitler’s Nazi regime. As Hermione Lee notes, Woolf’s anti-Semitism, directed at her husband, his mother, and other Jews she met, was often expressed in letters and in her diary; this prejudice was dramatically answered by the possibility of Nazi occupation in the 1930s (130). As the wife of Leonard Woolf, she knew that she was a potential victim, and she recorded in her diary how together she and Leonard planned suicide in such an event. Indeed, the Woolfs were on the Gestapo Arrest List for England and would certainly have perished if the Nazis did manage to capture them (Froula 287–88). Both Anna Snaith and Phyllis Lassner have described “Woolf’s linkage of women and Jews as victims of fascist oppression,” a connection she surely would not have emphasized if her own marriage had not put her into this precarious outsider’s category (Lassner 130). But Maren Linett provocatively suggests that in The Years, Woolf represents Abrahamson as a threat to Sara’s freedom, just as Woolf understood that Leonard’s Jewishness made Woolf vulnerable (when visiting Europe or in the case of Nazi invasion). That is, both Jews are unfairly blamed for these undesirable consequences.

Woolf’s real fears and sharp consciousness of the possible cost of her accidental Jewish identity can be directly contrasted with Stein’s reaction to the threat of Hitler in France. Stein and Toklas, Jews and homosexuals living together in rural France, failed to acknowledge the very real danger to their safety, yet survived in good spirits. Americans remembered Stein fondly and expressed concern about her well-being during the war; in 1942 Bennett Cerf noted in the Saturday Review of Literature, “Scarcely a day goes by at our office but somebody writes in to inquire about the safety and whereabouts of Gertrude Stein and her lifelong companion, Alice B. Toklas.” Stein documented her wartime experiences in Wars I Have Seen (1945), her first truly accessible book since the Autobiography, and it became her second bestseller. Woolf, of course, did not live to see this postwar success. Perhaps for a moment in the 1930s Stein and Woolf were “the same thing”—popular, accessible, modernist women writers—but as Stein put it in Composition as Explanation: “everything being alike
everything naturally everything is different simply different naturally simply different” (Stein Reader 501).

Notes

1. For a more detailed description of critics who have dismissed or neglected Flush, see Caughie 164n5. When Caughie published Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism in 1991, the only extended critical discussion of Flush was Susan Squier’s in Virginia Woolf and London.
2. But Woolf does note in the letter: “‘What a snob I was’” (qtd. in Hargreaves 192).

Works Cited

PART III

Woolf’s Marketplaces
In “Middlebrow,” Virginia Woolf attacked the category of the “Broadbrow,” defended by J. B. Priestley in a talk on the BBC (Priestley, “High”).1 As Melba Cuddy-Keane has shown, Woolf posited her “democratic highbrowism” against the middlebrow, which she scorned as a debased product of mass culture (22–34).2 My argument will trace Woolf’s critique of middlebrowism back to her criticism of modern familiar essays. At the end of the nineteenth century, and above all in the first decades of the twentieth century, the familiar essay became a regular feature of a great number of periodicals. Professional essayists such as Hilaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, A. G. Gardiner, E. V. Lucas, Robert Lynd, and J. B. Priestley, among others, wrote regularly about everyday topics in the conversational tone characteristic of the genre. Then known as “middles,” on account of their position in the papers, familiar essays benefited from a wide circulation through mass journalism and mass publishing. Woolf’s occasional, non-review essays have never been considered in relation to the marketing techniques and middlebrow ethos of her contemporary essayists. By recontextualizing her strategies of self-promotion within the vogue of—and controversy surrounding—the familiar essay, I would like to highlight the cultural critique at work in her material engagement with the genre.

The popularity of the familiar essay at the beginning of the twentieth century can be defined as a mass-cultural phenomenon insofar as the most prolific essayists mostly wrote for mass-market newspapers.
Robert Lynd, a regular contributor to the Daily News, Evening Standard and John O’London’s Weekly, also wrote weekly essays for the reputable New Statesman and Nation, as he amusingly explained in “A Thousand and One ‘Middles’” (562). Likewise, J. B. Priestley frequently wrote for mass-market dailies as well as for the Saturday Review and Spectator, both associated with the tradition of the essay. Alongside their prolific journalistic production, popular essayists regularly compiled and reprinted their middles in book form for a mass market. E. V. Lucas, for instance, published about thirty books of essays and was prone to reprinting the same essays twice. Similarly, Hilaire Belloc published many essay collections, and, in a parodic mode, repeated their title structures (On Nothing, On Everything, On Something). In addition to the essayists’ own book reprints, many middles would also reappear in a vast number of anthologies, published for a mass readership as well as for schools and universities. Oxford University Press, Dent’s Everyman Library, Methuen, Longman, Thomas Nelson, and Macmillan all published various books on modern familiar essays. The canonical ensembles constructed by these anthologies rarely included Woolf’s essays (and when they did, they typically selected her critical pieces3), but rather the essays of contemporary popular essayists. The fact that many of these anthologies featured introductions as well as notes and essay questions underlines the pedagogical use of modern familiar essays. Middles formed part of a teaching canon, as pupils learned how to write well by imitating old and new essayists.4

The mass circulation of familiar essays, as well as their pedagogical use, entailed a vehement critique of the genre. In order to understand Woolf’s criticism of the essay market, I would like to situate her polemical statements within a wider controversy on the decline of the essay in the context of mass culture. Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of the literary field helps one grasp the cultural stakes of this critical debate, a struggle for legitimacy between an essentialist conception of the genre and the defense of its commercial production.5 The generic field was indeed divided into conflicting discourses either attacking or reclaiming mass-cultural middles, and thereby making opposing uses of the essay tradition. Within this synchronic view of the genre, Woolf’s attempt to distinguish her own production from the mass market can be historicized as a strategic assertion of autonomy.

Critics of modern middles denied them any kind of literary status and opposed them to the “pure essay,” as Edmund Gosse defined it in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (777).6 In an essentialist overview of the genre, Gosse lamented the present “popularization of the essay” (778).
and hypothesized the death of the form. Likewise, Orlo Williams, essay maven and contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS), described the decline of the form since Charles Lamb, and explicitly blamed the “trade” of journalism (57). Within this polemic on the genre, Woolf stood as one of the most scathing critics of its marketing as well as one of its earliest ones. In “The Decay of Essay-writing” (1905), she contrasted Montaigne’s essays with the contemporary personal essay, which, though highly popular, had become a “mechanical” exercise of “dexterity,” measurable in terms of “sheets of paper and gallons of ink.” For Woolf, the essay now lacked the very “substance” of the genre, the essayist’s “personal opinion” (*E* 1: 25, 26). At the same time she was writing her first non-review essays, Woolf was also teaching composition at Morley College. In her “Report on Teaching at Morley College,” she considered the essay as “a safeness of mediocrity” compared to English literature (203). Tellingly enough, in “The Decay of Essay-writing” she associated the decline of the form with its transformation into a school exercise—“had they lacked writing-masters we should have lacked essayists” (26). A. R. Orage developed a similar argument in “On Essay-Writing,” in which he pictured the modern essay as a mere writing exercise by means of disparaging the conventional style of A. G. Gardiner.

Woolf wrote her later appreciations of the genre as she was contributing reviews to the TLS. She gradually elaborated a stronger critique based on the essay’s publishing constraints and the essayist’s professionalism, of mass culture. Her main argument bore on the essay’s format, which she took both as a cause and a symptom of a decline in the form. Woolf accused essayists of complying with the conditions of the publishing market by adapting their prose to a restricted space and thus turning essay-writing into a lucrative exercise in style. In her 1918 review on Lynd, “A Book of Essays,” she took up the issue of the essay’s size: “the only question may be how best to amuse the public for the space of 1,500 or 2,000 words, in which case the essay is no more than a dance upon the tight rope” (*E* 2: 212). When Bruce Richmond commissioned her to write a review of Ernest Rhys’s anthology *Modern English Essays* (1922), she embedded her condemnation of the essay’s publishing conditions within a genealogy of the genre. Although Rhys had already emphasized the question of the essay’s size in his introduction, Woolf transformed his historical account of the form into an indictment of its commodification:

The demand for the light middle not exceeding fifteen hundred words, or in special cases seventeen hundred and fifty, much
exceeds the supply. Where Lamb wrote one essay and Max perhaps writes two, Mr Belloc at a rough computation produces three hundred and sixty-five. They are very short, it is true. Yet with what dexterity the practised essayist will utilise his space...! As a feat of skill it is well worth watching. But the personality upon which Mr Belloc, like Mr Beerbohm, depends suffers in the process. (CR 1: 218)

Few contemporary essayists were spared from this caustic account of the genre as commercial bellesletism. Among them, Max Beerbohm, whom Woolf related to a slightly earlier period, was already praised as “our solitary essayist” in “Addison” (E 4: 115). Defining Beerbohm as the only true heir of Addison, Woolf compared modern essays “upon the ‘Delights of Summer’ or the ‘Approach of Age’” to “a hold-all knobbed with luggage packed in a hurry” (E 4: 115). In that respect, her criticism of the essay’s modern conditions is strongly reminiscent of Leslie Stephen’s “The Essayists,” which opposed Addison’s golden period to the modern essay’s chaotic environment: “the little friendly circle of sympathetic hearers is...dissolved into fragments” (65). Taking after her father’s nostalgic vision of the genre, Woolf expressed her allegiance to the essay tradition while making an exclusive and oppositional use of the classics as she pitted either Montaigne, Addison, Lamb, or Hazlitt against modern essayists.

Woolf’s assessment of modern essayists cannot be fully understood without being contrasted with the numerous defenses of the genre by popular essayists. Indeed, they, too, claimed their inclusion in the essay tradition. In many essays on the essay as well as in introductions to anthologies, popular practitioners of the genre referred their essays back to the origins of the periodical press in order to promote the legitimacy of their journalistic production. In his introduction to Essayists Past and Present, Priestley reclaimed the modern essay’s marketing conditions against the idea of a decline of the genre: “We are always led to infer that [the practice of collecting contributions to the Press] is a new and reprehensible practice, a mark of a degenerate age. The truth is, of course, that practically all the best essays in the language have first seen the light in the periodical press” (18). Like Priestley, Robert Lynd defended the modern middle against “[l]iterary puritans” (“The Essay” xv). This criticism may very well have targeted Woolf, who was precisely blamed for her highbrow critique of modern middles. Shortly after The Common Reader was published, the essayist and regular contributor to the Saturday Review Gerald Gould responded to “The
Modern Essay” by entitling his essay “The Happy Essayist” in reference to Woolf’s depiction of “the habitual essayist” (CR 1: 219). Against her definition of the “pure” essay, he reasserted the literary value of modern middles on the material grounds she had condemned. By expounding “four main fallacies” in her reasoning (549), Gould drew implicitly on Lamb’s essays on “popular fallacies” and thus allied his own text with the tradition of the genre. In the same way Lynd later defended the reviewer against Woolf’s “contemptuous” point of view in her pamphlet “Reviewing” (“Last?” 640),7 this instance of counter-discourse reveals an open cultural conflict between Woolf and the popular essayists of her time—“the stinking underworld of hack-writers, people like Priestley, Lynd, Squire,” as she called them (L 5: 259).

In the context of this controversy on the genre, Woolf gradually developed a logic of distinction in the publishing and reprinting of her essays by differentiating her production from the prevailing marketing techniques of popular essayists. This elitist attitude to the market was itself not separate from commercial concerns, as she clearly made financial gains from her essays.

Woolf’s first occasional essays date back to the very beginning of her career,8 when she started writing in the “hope to make a little money” (L 1: 160)—she earned £3 9s for each of her contributions in the Guardian and £5 for “Street Music,” written for the National Review. With this commercial incentive, Woolf began her career as much an essayist as a book reviewer as she was able to submit several uncommissioned, topical essays to the Guardian in response to Mrs. Lyttelton’s invitation to contribute 1,500 words “on any subject” (qtd. in McNeillie xii). As she began contributing reviews to the TLS, which remained her main outlet from 1905 to 1919, she became primarily a literary critic, so that she made her main statements on the familiar essay when she was no longer writing non-review essays. Leonard Woolf’s appointment as literary editor in the Nation and Athenaeum (N&A) marked a turning point in her practice of the familiar essay, as Virginia could now submit occasional pieces as well as shorter notices on any topic; “To Spain” (1923) was her first publication for the journal. By the mid-1920s, she had become a famous essayist and the success of The Common Reader in 1925 consecrated her fame. From then on her output of familiar essays increased and benefited from a wider range of outlets. Woolf then developed specific marketing strategies, allowing her to secure a high symbolic capital which she later exploited and renegotiated in mass-market publications.

To begin with, she mainly published her occasional pieces in high-brow papers. In the wake of the co-publication of “To Spain” in both
the N&A in Britain and the New Republic in America, these two journals came to constitute the main outlets for her occasional pieces even as she contributed several to other highbrow publications such as The Criterion, Arts, and The Yale Review. She was particularly keen to write for The Criterion, and, when asked to contribute in 1926, reminded its manager of the double rate arranged by Eliot (£20 for “On Being Ill”). Woolf’s restricted production in modernist journals did not disconnect her from material concerns; these journals allowed her to write longer essays for a high fee, and thus to reshape the format of the genre in a high market.

Apart from the fact that Woolf frequently co-published her essays in several venues, and, for that matter, benefited from an arrangement between the N&A and the New Republic, the commercial dimension of her enterprise can best be seen by the fact that she occasionally reprinted her essays as short books in limited editions. In doing this, she not only “maximised income from her minor works” (Mepham 149), she simultaneously reclaimed a mass-produced form as a distinctive highbrow practice. In 1930, Woolf republished three essays in signed, limited editions: “Street Haunting: A London Adventure,” “On Being Ill,” and “Beau Brummel.” The reprint of the first piece, originally written for The Yale Review, was suggested to Woolf by the Westgate Press (which sold it in an edition of 500 signed copies at $7.50 each), but the fact that she chose to have the Hogarth Press reprint “On Being Ill” shows that she was keen to promote herself as an essayist as well as a literary critic. Sold at the cost of 21s, “On Being Ill” involved Woolf as an actual publisher of her own work. The materiality of this thirty-six-page essay in book form, which Woolf typeset herself, stood in sharp contrast with the typical modern middle, reprinted in collections: its pictorial dust jacket and marbled endpapers, and Woolf’s signature in purple ink, all marked it as a collectable item of high culture. A. S. McDowall’s review in the TLS praised it as such, and Woolf herself mentioned its added value to a reader who complained about the printing of the book (L 4: 260). Woolf’s private printing thus differed significantly from the professional essayist’s recourse to large publishing houses, such as Methuen and Dent, all the more so as she only reprinted her non-review essays as books of their own rather than in a volume. Through these reprints in book form, she capitalized on the mass commodification of the book and simultaneously accomplished an act of self-canonization. The convergence of the economic and generic logic is crucial here: at a time when the familiar essay had become a mass-marketed, conventional form,
Virginia Woolf and the Middlebrow Market

Woolf reclaimed a declining genre, made it into a rarity, and thereby legitimized her work as that of a “true” essayist. This strategic enterprise of self-promotion was anticipated by her highbrow *ars poetica* of the “pure” essay in her main statement on the genre, “The Modern Essay”: “the essay must be pure—...pure from dullness, deadness, and deposits of extraneous matter” (CR 1: 213). Woolf thereby defines the essay’s aesthetic status as an autonomous form transcending both the facts within and the publishing conditions outside the text. In keeping with this essentialist definition of the form, she represents the modern middle as an aesthetic failure, that is, pure matter devoid of form:

the art of writing has for backbone some fierce attachment to an idea....But Mr Belloc and Mr Lucas and Mr Squire are not fiercely attached to anything in itself. They share the contemporary dilemma—that lack of an obstinate conviction which lifts ephemeral sounds through the misty sphere of anybody’s language to the land where there is a perpetual marriage... (CR 1: 221–22)

In this neoplatonic image, prepared by an earlier reference to metempsychosis in Walter Pater’s passage on the *Mona Lisa* (CR 1: 213–14), Woolf accuses modern essayists of having lost the essence of essay-writing. Moreover, through the adjective “fierce” and the adverb “fiercely,” which implicitly rework the statements by Ernest Rhys, the editor of *Modern English Essays*, on the “backbone” of essay-writing (Rhys v), she allusively inscribes her own metaphorical figure—the wolf—as a counterpoint to the decline of the essay. Through this self-reflexive signature, which only becomes apparent as it concludes a series of animal images criticizing two contemporary essayists, Woolf implicitly points back to her own practice as an alternative to modern essays.¹⁰

The highbrowism of Woolf’s essayistic practice and discourse takes on its full significance when one contrasts it with the self-proclaimed middlebrowism of contemporary practitioners of the familiar essay. Their mass-market production together with the persona of the common man they constructed in their essays mark them as a fine example of middlebrowism, all the more so as they conceived the category without any derogatory connotations. Lynd underlined and finally undermined the distinction between high and low tastes in “Highbrows” (1926). More decisively, Priestley explicitly positioned himself as a “Broadbrow” in his 1926 essay “High, Low, Broad” and his 1932 radio talk “To a High-Brow.” While popular essayists developed an anti-highbrow discourse,
they shaped an affable and urbane persona in their middles, addressing the common reader in an informal tone. Through their characteristic interest in trifles and their congenial rhetoric, they embedded middlebrow values in their very practice of the genre.

Now, Woolf’s arguments against modern familiar essays precisely encompassed a criticism of their middlebrow ethos. At the same time she condemned their failure to express “personality” (CR 1: 217), she denounced the middlebrow ideology of the everyman which informed them. Indeed, in her 1918 review of Lynd, she established a structural link between the position of middles in newspapers, the “middling” dimension, and their incapacity to communicate individuality:

It is a rule that after the politics we come to the lighter form of essay and so to the reviews…. [T]he essay is now chiefly employed to mitigate the severity of Acts, reforms, and social questions; it entices us to perform the operation of thinking under an anaesthetic…. Mr Lynd has all the merits of an open and generous mind. He is always tolerant and for the most part sanguine…. Thus remembering the claims of humanity he no doubt willingly suppresses what we take to be the chief stock-in-trade of the essayist—himself. (E 2: 212–13)

Although she was reviewing a book of essays, Woolf replaced the middle in its initial place in the newspaper so as to uncover its function—“mitigating” political leaders. Thus linking the middle’s in-between material position with its middle-brow ideology, she condemned Lynd’s politics of middleness as an underlying form of manipulation, and portrayed him as a producer of mass culture. Her other main argument against Lynd consisted in questioning his “claims of humanity” (213)—an inclusive value which was typically promoted by popular essayists. In “Middlebrow,” Woolf harshly criticized “the middlebrow version of what they have the impudence to call real humanity” (DM 117). In an earlier version of “Middlebrow,” the draft entitled “Three Characters,” she sketched the broadbrow as a man who believes in “human nature” and writes about all things human. The following satirical portrait targets the figure of the common man, which strongly conjures up the genial persona adopted by popular essayists: “He is the middle party in the state…. I am just an ordinary sort of chap. When I write a book, he says, I write for the ordinary man in the street” (25–26). This 1932 attack on the middlebrow already surfaced in her depiction of Lynd as a “tolerant” essayist endowed with “an open and generous mind” (E 2: 213).
The term “middlebrow” was not used in England until 1925, and the debate over the middlebrow developed from then onward. As early as 1918, however, Woolf’s punning on the “middling” dimension of middles articulated an early denunciation of middlebrowism, testifying to the cultural critique at work in her reflection on the essay.

As a matter of fact, various figural anticipations of the cultural category can be found in her statements on modern essayists. For instance, Woolf criticized Hilaire Belloc for addressing the crowd and “dilut[ing] the strength of personality” (CR 1: 219). Assessing contemporary essays as commercial and commonplace, she distinguished their mediocrity from two extremes—the “extravagant beauty of Walter Pater” and the “intemperate candour of Leslie Stephen”: “if one reads Mr Lucas, Mr Lynd, or Mr Squire in the bulk, one feels that a common greyness silvers everything” (CR 1: 220). Both the producers and the consumers of mass culture were blamed in “The Patron and the Crocus” as Woolf reimagined the reader-writer relationship as a private, exclusive bond, against the image of a passive crowd: “It is genial, affable, warm-hearted. . . . [L]et nobody think . . . that the art of Mr Lynd of the Daily News is an easy one. It is no despicable feat to start a million brains running at nine o’clock in the morning” (CR 1: 208).

Woolf’s highbrow criticism of the essay market did not prevent her from publishing familiar essays for mass-market women’s magazines, which constituted lucrative publishing outlets. In 1928, she published “Waxworks at the Abbey” in Eve, and her “Six Essays on London Life” came out in Good Housekeeping between 1931 and 1932. The fact that Woolf contested middlebrowism while occasionally writing for middlebrow periodicals could be said to support Huysen’s argument that there remained a “powerful imaginary insisting on the divide while time and again violating that categorical separation in practice” (367). As a matter of fact, the way Woolf was advertised as a “distinguished author” in Good Housekeeping (E 5: 287) shows that mass-market venues foregrounded her status as a highbrow writer. Moreover, as Melba Cuddy-Keane has very well shown, the politics of cultural border crossings operating in her Good Housekeeping essays was closely linked with her critique of mass culture (47–52). Woolf’s earlier review of E. V. Lucas’s book of essays London Revisited (1916) reinforces the idea that she distinguished the aesthetic and political project of her London essays from contemporary middles on London. Her devaluation of Lucas’s representation of the city focuses indeed on its middlebrow appeal: “if you belong to what is evidently no small section of the human race—that is, the public which reads whatever Mr Lucas writes—the book may be
recommended as a good example of his manner” (E 2: 50). Tellingly enough, Woolf’s contribution to Eve, “Waxworks at the Abbey,” followed from her refusal to publish an article for Lucas. Choosing not to contribute to a mass-market daily or an academic venue, she preferred to “write a little article on Queen Elizabeth’s nose for Eve” (L 3: 468–69), before publishing it first in the highbrow New Republic. Woolf’s engagement with the mass-cultural press may therefore lead us to qualify her highbrow attitude to the mass market, but not ultimately to question her ideological condemnation of the middlebrow.

Although Woolf remained severely critical of the middlebrow even while contributing to middlebrow magazines, I would finally like to underline one significant instance in which she did momentarily qualify her critique of the essay market. At the end of her essay on Addison, she touched on a possible way of thinking across the highbrow-middlebrow divide as she envisioned the democratic potential of the “prosaic”:

Whether it was a high thing, or whether it was a low thing, whether an epic is more profound or a lyric more passionate, undoubtedly it is due to Addison that prose is now prosaic—the medium which makes it possible for people of ordinary intelligence to communicate their ideas to the world. Addison is the respectable ancestor of an innumerable progeny. Pick up the first weekly journal and the article upon the “Delights of Summer” or the “Approach of Age” will show his influence. But it will also show, unless the name of Mr Max Beerbohm, our solitary essayist, is attached to it, that we have lost the art of writing essays. (CR 1: 105)

In a striking paronomasia, Woolf reclaimed the “prosaic” dimension of “prose” as a democratic principle, whereby everybody can potentially intervene in the public sphere. Samuel Johnson’s famous neoclassical praise of Addison’s “middle style”—“his prose is the model of the middle style” (187)—is implicitly reworked into a modern politics of form, embedding a demotic value in mass culture itself. The adjective “prosaic,” however, remains double-edged, as it associates middles with the democratic sphere of everyday speech while pointing to the debased, commonplace aspect of mass-cultural journalism. Now, in its very semantic instability, Woolf’s understanding of the prosaic momentarily displaces “the issue of the divide as a central conceptual trope” (Huyssen 367). Although she finally invalidates her democratic assessment of Addison’s influence on modern essays, and proceeds to
present Beerbohm as Addison’s only true heir, I would like to suggest that this critical insight constitutes a valuable theoretical line of inquiry allowing us to take a transversal view of the genre. By considering the demotic imaginary of the familiar essay, one is led to rethink the cultural dichotomy crystallizing around the genre’s inscription in the mass market. Beyond Bourdieu’s agonistic conception of the literary field one can place Woolf and middlebrow essayists in a common discursive sphere, looking back toward a common generic tradition based on a thematic focus on the quotidian and a rhetorical emphasis on the conversational. Even though Woolf and middlebrow essayists ultimately defended opposing cultural stances, they both drew on the familiar essay’s potential to construct a sense of community by foregrounding the demotic value of daily life.

The polemical intent of Woolf’s discourse on the essay market has become less easily perceptible now that “the essayists of 1920” (CR 1: 221) have largely disappeared from the essay canon. It is precisely this synchronic perspective, however, which enables us to historicize the critique of middlebrowism underlying her marketing practices as an essayist. Beyond the cultural controversy catalyzed by middles, this synchronic view also invites us to perceive—with and against Woolf herself—the symbolic common ground constituted by the familiar essay’s “prosaic” prose.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Michael H. Whitworth for his valuable comments on a previous version of this chapter.
2. See also Baxendale’s revaluation of Priestley (15–34). While criticizing both highbrows and lowbrows, Priestley promoted the broadbrow as a cultural happy medium.
4. The vogue of the familiar essay in the early decades of the twentieth century has attracted little critical attention. On this topic, see Baldick and Hesse.
5. See Bourdieu’s concept of literary legitimacy (42). While mapping the whole literary field as a relational field of differences, Bourdieu lays particular emphasis on the dynamics of differentiation at work in the “field of restricted production” (58).
6. On the need to historicize the claim to produce “pure” literature, see Bourdieu (254–66).
7. Woolf answered Lynd in the next issue of the New Statesman and Nation and alluded to the polemic in her diary by presenting herself as an “outsider” (D 5: 245).
8. On the beginning of Woolf’s essayistic career, see Dubino.
9. This analysis is partly indebted to Rainey. However, Woolf did not systematically reprint her non-review essays in separate editions, and, moreover, she contributed to middlebrow magazines.
10. In “The Modern Essay” Woolf pits herself against modern essayists through a complex pastoral metaphor. First, she alludes to “Lycidas” in relation to Belloc, as she qualifies the shepherd referred to in his essay as “unfit for the care of sheep.” Belloc is thereby identified as a producer of mass culture, “shouting through a megaphone to a crowd” (CR 1: 219). The herd-shepherd relationship is reversed in reference to Clutton-Brock, as Woolf stages herself as a solitary sheep escaping the discourse of mass culture: “‘I’ slips off to the woods” (CR 1: 220–21). She ultimately sketches a self-referential signature through the terms “fierce” and “fiercely,” echoing the presence of “the grim Wolf with privy paw” in “Lycidas” (128). As was analyzed by Cuddy-Keane (28–29), Woolf quoted from “Lycidas” again in “Middlebrow.”


12. For her Good Housekeeping series, Woolf “received £50 per article less 10% to her agent” (Clarke 663).

13. Woolf quoted Johnson earlier in her essay (CR 1: 103). Her concluding remark on the modern essayist’s “effort . . . to write like Addison” (CR 1: 105) also drew on Johnson (Johnson 187).

14. For example, Woolf and Lynd sometimes wrote essays on similar topics, though they treated them differently. See Lynd’s essays “On Being Rather Ill” and “A Note on Elizabethan Plays.” Woolf’s later essay “Notes on an Elizabethan Play” diverged from his devaluation of Elizabethan dramatists and his attitude to the ordinary reader.

---

Works Cited


How (and Why) Should One Read a Periodical?

How should one read a periodical? And, more to the point of this volume, how, and why, should one read Virginia Woolf in a periodical? I start by revising Woolf’s titular question “How Should One Read a Book?” for two reasons: first, to borrow the wry defamiliarization Woolf’s title enacts, the way it urges attentiveness to the actual cognitive moves, ordinarily subconscious, that are involved in reading; second, and by substituting “periodical” for “book,” to call attention to Woolf’s own preference for print bound between hard covers—a preference widely shared by her intellectual contemporaries and since naturalized by the academic study of literature. Several factors have made this a propitious time for renewed interest in Woolf’s appearances in periodicals: the material turn in modernist studies and literary study generally, with its emphasis on the “thick descriptions” of cultural context for which periodicals offer such a rich archive; the related emergence of “periodical studies” as a critical subgenre within modernist studies; the anxiety of exhaustion that shadows a scholarly community organized around a single, canonical author’s work. Thus it seems a good time to borrow the phrasing of a question Woolf did ask in order to pose one that she did not: How should one read a periodical?

For it seems all but unthinkable that Woolf would have entitled an essay, “How Should One Read a Newspaper?” or “How Should One Read a Magazine?” precisely because she favored books over more
ephemeral printed artifacts. Like the scholars who meticulously re-trace her steps, Woolf reveled in the physicality and abundance of books, sung the necessity of bad books as well as good books, personified books, and filled her favored domestic spaces—fictional and actual—with books. She addressed The Common Reader—a volume that drew heavily on material that appeared initially in periodicals—to readers in “all those rooms, too humble to be called libraries, yet full of books, where reading is carried on” (1984: 1). Though Woolf, like most of her contemporaries, spent hours each week reading newspapers and periodicals, one searches her writing in vain for encomia to the pleasures of curling up with a good newspaper. Rather, periodicals appear as neutral containers of content, as markers of political or aesthetic partisanships or, when their materiality does emerge, as highly problematic mediators between reader and writer, or reader and reality. In “The Patron and the Crocus,” a nuanced consideration of the mediations of the literary marketplace, Woolf acknowledges both the need to carefully envision an audience and the difficulty of reaching it via the welter of contemporary periodicals; she warns against the temptation to write, to editors’ specifications, “bright and brisk and amusing” (CR 1984: 208) articles that fade from notice with the passing day. Isa in Between the Acts observes that “for her generation the newspaper was a book”; in context it is clear that this is not a salutary change (20). Woolf shared with many contemporaries a sense of an “intellectual hierarchy of written formats,” to borrow Lee Erickson’s phrase, with books at the top, magazines in the middle, and newspapers at the bottom (13). As Laurel Brake and others have shown, the nascent field of literary study silently internalized this hierarchy, establishing the book as the default object of study despite the fact that, as George Saintsbury noted in 1896, “more than half the most valuable books of the age in some departments’” would have been unlikely to see the light of day if not for the periodicals that published them in earlier forms (qtd. in Brake 1). Placing renewed emphasis on Woolf’s interactions with periodicals thus requires that we read against her predilections, foregrounding an area of activity that she imagined as secondary. She did so even though she certainly published more words and reached more readers in periodicals than in books during her lifetime, and though distinguishing “writing for books” from “writing for periodicals” is, in many cases, more difficult than it seems.

A vigorous return to periodicals thus promises a welcome re-orientation, as it corrects for one of Woolf’s (and the period’s) own historical deformations. Marrying “Woolf studies” with “periodical studies,” however, potentially cuts in the opposite direction, threatening
to co-opt periodicals to scholarly ends that reiterate the centrality of the canonical author and the (a)historical marginality of periodicals. The subdisciplinary labels “Woolf studies” and “periodical studies” offer conflicting instructions on what should occupy the critical foreground. The fundamental tenet of periodical studies is an insistence on seeing periodicals as “autonomous objects of study” rather than “containers of discrete bits of information,” “primary research materials” rather than sources of “secondary confirming evidence” (Latham and Scholes 517–18; Pykett 15). This orientation would seem a poor fit with author-centered scholarship, which despite the re-orientations of cultural studies and new historicism still largely treats periodicals as contexts—carriers of social discourses to which the author can be placed in relation. At this point in critical history, the need for work that helps us to map and devise ways of interpreting the vast and heterogeneous universe of early-twentieth-century periodicals may be greater than the need for new readings of Woolf. It was in newspapers and periodicals that Woolf’s contemporaries of all social classes did most of their reading; it was there, largely, that debates about the social and political functions of literature and the arts—one of the most fertile contexts for Woolf’s work to have been reclaimed in recent years—took place, and where the contested category of “literature” itself was constituted for most readers. Yet the cultural-material turn in early twentieth-century studies has not brought about a fundamental rethinking of the centrality of the book as the key literary artifact.

Woolfian studies are not exhausted. Scholarly preoccupations tend to be self-regenerating, and the sheer number of articles and monographs generated by the more fecund author “industries” make them, as Derek Attridge has suggested, prone to acts of scholarly forgetting that allow for the safe repetition of what previous scholars have said, “using a newer vocabulary to articulate the same insights” (170). Young scholars are understandably drawn to major figures—whose work is satisfying to intellectuals fed on the aesthetics that reign in English departments, and whose names keep appearing in the titles of monographs and journal articles—even as those scholars are intimidated by the large volume of secondary work that needs to be mastered in order to enter the conversation. In this light, periodicals might seem to offer young scholars an inexhaustible archive of new “contexts” in which to place Woolf and her writing. But that same abundance of Woolf criticism argues the greater need for work that will help us grapple with the world of periodicals than for new contexts in which to read Woolf. For that reason this essay is more concerned with what Woolf can tell
us about periodicals than what periodicals can tell us about Woolf; it advocates—and takes steps toward practicing—a scholarship in which we allow the periodical itself to upstage Woolf. It does so via a reading of the “Patron and the Crocus” in its initial, periodical appearances. “The Patron and the Crocus” is best-known among Woolf scholars as a component of the first Common Reader, and thus foregrounds the tension between periodical and book publication.

“The Patron and the Crocus”

In publishing “The Patron and the Crocus,” Woolf used the pages of two periodicals whose intellectualism was decidedly suited to her to probe some of the problems created by the centrality of periodicals in the literary marketplace. From our vantage these appearances—in the English Nation and Athenaeum (N&A) of 12 April 1924 and the American New Republic of the following 7 May—also usefully raise some of the problems of theory and methodology that vex and inspire scholars of periodical culture. These include how to “close read” not only the textual material within a periodical but also the periodical-as-form, locating significance in such elements as visual design, format, price, paper type, and other factors which reveal, among other things, a publication’s efforts to situate itself generically and thereby hail its readers. As Mark Morrisson observes, “material markers of genre, such as price, page size, types of advertising, and frequency of publication, all contribute to a reader’s horizon of expectations for a magazine” (39).

Periodical genres inform Woolf’s critique of the role of periodicals in literary production, as she delineates the confusing array of “patrons” available to the writer and emphasizes the importance of choosing correctly:

There is the daily Press, the weekly Press, the monthly Press; the English public and the American public; the best-seller public and the worst-seller public; the highbrow public and the red-blood public…. Thus the writer who has been moved by the sight of the first crocus in Kensington Gardens has, before he sets pen to paper, to choose from a crowd of competitors the particular patron who suits him best. (CR 1 1984: 206–7)

Interestingly the exemplary, fictional artist’s inspiration precedes its periodical nexus. The writer is “moved by the sight of the first crocus”
not by an editor’s assignment, but his text’s form is dependent on the choice of patron, which must be made “before he sets pen to paper.” And while the essay will later take a positive turn, here the media is posited as a deforming influence rather than a generative one. Those who pander to the multitude by accepting editors’ offers of “[t]wenty pounds down for your crocus in precisely fifteen hundred words” produce plants “only very distantly related to the original little yellow or purple flower,” plants destined for instant decay: “But the night comes and these flowers fade… [T]he most brilliant of articles when removed from its environment is dust and sand and the husks of straw. Journalism embalmed in a book is unreadable” (1984: 208). Woolf is at odds with herself here, raising the periodical marketplace as a deforming influence within the pages of a periodical, while emphasizing obliquely how vitally important the periodical as mediator is, combining with the implied reader behind it to create an atmosphere in which the writer’s work will either flourish or be stunted.

This tension in the essay is heightened in the context of its book publication in *The Common Reader*, where it appeared in 1925 with minimal revisions. This reappearance illustrates Margaret Beetham’s claim that such “rescue[s] of the text” implicitly devalue the periodical setting. Book re-publication, Beetham argues, is typically viewed as relocating a here-tofore-ephemeral text not only in the durable space of the book but in the valued context of a “recognized genre, i.e. fiction or poetry or essay” (25). “The Patron and the Crocus” is one of eighteen *Common Reader* essays (of twenty-two total) reprinted whole or revised from periodicals—a fact glossed in the “Author’s Note” to the initial British edition: “Some of these papers appeared originally in the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Athenaeum*, *The Nation and Athenaeum*,… and I have to thank the editors for allowing me to reprint them here (CR 1 1925: vii).” Calling the essays “papers” gives them a hint of the academic or quasi-official; it also implies that they had an existence independent of their periodical history—before there were periodical articles, there were “papers” that could “appear.” This framing elides the fact that some of these “papers” were called into existence by periodical editors—were assignments, in short—and thus could only sketchily be seen as existing independently. Once we get past the book’s front matter to Woolf’s introduction, we see how she re-frames the texts again, fictively positing them as fresh utterances, written to the moment by a common reader for other common readers: “if [the common reader] has, as Dr Johnson maintained, some say in the final distribution of poetical honours, then, perhaps, it may be worth while to write down a few of the ideas and opinions which, insignificant
in themselves, yet contribute to so mighty a result” (CR 1 1984: 2). While Woolf is literally upfront about the periodical genesis of many of these texts, her use of the term “papers” and her fictive reframing of them as spontaneous productions of a “common reader” encode her ambivalence about periodical production. So do her assertive revisions of many of the essays, and her writing of several important, new essays for the volume, necessary because, as she wrote in her diary, she found “the collection of articles” to be an “inartistic method” (D 2: 261).

How might “The Patron and the Crocus” have signified differently in its initial settings? Two shared aspects of the N&A and the New Republic make them resonant locations for “The Patron and the Crocus,” with its dense figuration of patronage and its discomfort with modern, segmented print culture: their similar self-positioning in the wider print marketplace, and their reliance on a particular form of early-twentieth-century patronage. Reading the N&A and the New Republic for 1924, one is struck by their bibliographic similarities. Both were text-heavy, used no illustrations or photographs within editorial content, and had a relatively low ratio of advertising-to-content. Both worked to segregate advertising from editorial copy—the New Republic relegating advertisements to a wrapper that enclosed the magazine, the N&A limiting them mainly to the back of the front cover and to odd-numbered pages in the paper’s second half—that is, after the political coverage, the letters to the editor, and any signed contributions. They signaled intellectual seriousness through these and other bibliographic details, beginning with the front covers. Starting with its price—6d weekly—stated in large type in the upper right-hand corner, the N&A placed itself with the Spectator, New Statesman, and Times Literary Supplement (TLS) in the hierarchy of weekly publications, distinguishing itself from the two-penny T.P’s Weekly and others. Practically, this visual emphasis on price is surprising and superfluous. The price is repeated below the flag, and its regular readers certainly knew that it was a weekly. All this suggests that the “6d. Weekly” announcement is intended for newsstand browsers or other non-subscribers, offering a quick code to identify its place in the print hierarchy, and thus its target audience. Its flag, with images of Roman heads framing the “and The Athenaeum” subtitle, gestures toward classical learning, restraint, and democracy. A large advertisement for Harrap’s publishers, occupying the bottom half of the cover, might seem to cut against this general thrust but, in the English context, in fact gestures backward to the nineteenth century, when newspaper front pages were dedicated to text-heavy classified advertising. The tradition of the front page as a “content page” was a recent
development, linking it not with the sober traditions of journalism but with its recent degradations.

Like the N&A, the *New Republic* featured an unillustrated cover (differentiating it from the American market’s innumerable glossies) and a large-type indication of its price—at fifteen cents three times that of the *Saturday Evening Post*, and thus roughly equivalent in the American market to the N&A in the British market. At the top of its first inside page, the *New Republic*, in a format borrowed from the English intellectual journals, ran a second title-flag, this one declaring the periodical to be “A Journal of Opinion.” The N&A’s front-page flag—which gestured weakly toward sustaining the *Athenaeum*’s separate identity by mixing type-sizes and styles—testifies to a second similarity with the *New Republic*: a schizoid nature in their treatment of politics and the arts. Under H. W. Massingham, the *Nation* in 1921 framed its absorption of the *Athenaeum* as a boon that would allow it “‘to devote a far greater space to science, musical and dramatic art, and literature’” (qtd. in Sullivan 269). For the next two years, the paper was designed as though it were two separate publications, with the cover of the political *Nation* on the first page and a second cover for the arts-oriented *Athenaeum* appearing toward the middle of the paper. John Maynard Keynes acquired a controlling interest in the paper in 1923, and shifted it toward party-line Liberalism, away from Massingham’s more leftward orientation (see Dickens’s essay in this collection). Keynes hired Leonard Woolf as literary editor and gave him near-total control over his pages, resulting in a sometimes dramatic disconnect between the two halves of the paper (L. Woolf, *Downhill* 139). This disconnect manifested itself in strikingly different rhetorical orientations in the back of the paper—where Leonard Woolf’s chatty and accessible “The World of Books” column could be found—and the front, where the political columns assume in readers a striking amount of knowledge of contemporary politics and economics. The second full sentence in the N&A of 12 April 1924 reads, “The McKenna Report, as might be expected, has little more than a negative value” (“Events” 36).

Looking back on the *New Republic*’s early years, Irving Howe noted a similar gulf between its literary and political content. The literary content, of course, made the *New Republic* one of the most important publications in the history of modernism: it published scores of modernist luminaries and hosted Edmund Wilson’s influential articles claiming modernism as the aesthetic of the early twentieth century. These modernist writers, Howe noted, “have no politics at all or find liberalism inadequate or uninteresting” (xxi). Politics and literature in
the *New Republic* shared “a mode of co-existence rather than of fraternity” (xxi), Howe wrote. Neither publication attempted to bridge the gap between their front (political) and back (literature and the arts) content or to foster dialogue between them. Coverage of literature and the arts served, rather, as “miscellaneous” content designed to increase the appeal of the magazines. In this segregation of politics from the arts, the *New Republic* and the *N&A* thus differed from such publications as the *New Age*, the *English Review* under Ford Madox Ford, and little magazines such as *Masses* and *The New Freewoman*, which in various ways sought to unify literary and political activity, or to place the two in dialogue.¹⁰

Their relegation of literature and the arts to “miscellaneous” content complicates the papers’ attempts to situate themselves in the modern print marketplace. In their orientation around a political party (or, in the *New Republic*’s case, a party’s insurgent wing), they are a throwback to a nineteenth- or even an eighteenth-century model in which a newspaper expresses a political outlook and offers a site for debate within the limits of that outlook. Their anti-modern bibliographic coding, eschewing illustrations, subheadlines, and other graphic aids to reading, meshes with this orientation. But their miscellaneity—their use of articles on science, literature, and the arts to diversify their appeal rather than as part of a coherent cultural program—partsakes of the innovations that produced the modern, mass press. At the same time, their content could directly declare their distance from mass journalism: both the *New Republic* and the *N&A* regularly published articles that protested, diagnosed, or satirized modern journalism, positioning the papers as critical observers of an acknowledged social problem. Woolf’s “The Patron and the Crocus” serves this agenda, particularly with its satire of light newspaper writing. “The daily Press,” Woolf writes, “is a great multiplier of crocuses,” but these are the shiny if short-lived crocuses that die at the end of each day, crocuses that “blossom on every breakfast table from John o’Groats to the Land’s End” to “give two million eyes something bright and brisk and amusing to look at” (*CR* 1 1984: 208). Woolf makes clear that she mulls publishing in such outlets “in fancy alone” (*CR* 1 1984: 207).

The issues of the *New Republic* and the *N&A* in which “The Patron and the Crocus” appeared both contained other articles critical of the mass press. Adjacent to Woolf’s article in the *New Republic* stands a satire on editorship by journalist and short story writer Chester T. Crowell. Crowell’s “My Daughter, Oh, My Daughter” lampoons newspapers that self-censor to protect the sensibilities of an implied
juvenile readership: in Crowell’s sketch, a fictional “family paper,” *The Daily Newsprint*, is losing a circulation war because the competing *Daily Wow* can print salacious details of a divorce case. Like Woolf, Crowell raises the complications of a segmented market; Crowell’s fictional editor warns a writer against pitching a story “too highbrow for the immigrant in the kitchen who will fall heir to the publication as soon as it reaches the waste-basket” (281–82). In both articles, editors are played for laughs (of a broader variety in Crowell’s). The same issue also contains an editorial calling for journalistic professionalism, noting a “lack of respect for the journalist . . . based upon the lack of any sort of discipline within the ranks” (“Week” 269). The N&A in which “The Patron and the Crocus” appears contains a note protesting an Allied Newspaper Group stock issue, raising an urgent concern among critics of the British press—the concentration of newspaper ownership in a small number of combines. The N&A frequently criticized the British press, publishing at least eleven leading or signed articles on the topic from 1922 to 1924, including two long excerpts from Norman Angell’s harshly critical *The Press and the Organisation of Society* in 1923. In both periodicals, such repeated critiques of the press combined with price, visual layout, and format to assert an authoritative position in a stratified print marketplace.

One other, crucial aspect of these periodicals’ market orientation was only obliquely visible from their bibliographic codes: the fact that they were heavily subsidized, not grounded financially in circulation figures and advertising revenue. The *New Republic* was bankrolled by the heiress Dorothy Whitney Straight and her husband Willard Straight as a forum for the progressivism of Herbert Croly. The Straights, according to their youngest son, paid an average of $95,000 per year for thirty-eight years to keep the *New Republic* afloat (Rauchway 76). When Keynes acquired the *Nation* in 1923, it had long been subsidized by the Rowntrees, owners of the cocoa company. Despite his efforts Keynes was unable to make the paper self-sustaining, so he essentially served as its chairman of the board and chief patron (Harrod 326). These periodicals, then, were not primarily commercial; their copy price and advertising practices’ symbolic function—asserting a position in a hierarchy of periodicals—were as significant as the (insufficient) revenue they generated. Woolf probably knew little of the financial basis of the *New Republic*, but she was intimately aware of the fortunes of the N&A; when Keynes appointed Leonard Woolf literary editor she wrote that the post meant “safety for the moment, even luxury” (*D* 2: 240). Though Leonard Woolf resigned as editor in 1926, Keynes remained in
place until 1929, and during these years the N&A remained by far the leading publisher of Virginia Woolf’s journalism. She was, in essence, patronized by Keynes in these years.

The New Republic and N&A are thus uniquely significant locations for Woolf’s clever and complicated formulation of “the patron.” This slippery figure has given critics trouble over the years; it inconsistently embeds individual readers, aggregated readerships, and the various middlemen who serve them. The patron begins for Woolf in the singular, as a “desirable man . . . who will cajole the best out of the writer’s brain,” then takes on the form of segments of the press—“the daily press, the weekly press, the monthly press,”—before expanding to various reading publics—“the best-seller public and the worst-seller public, the highbrow public and the red-blood public” (CR 1 1984: 206–07). Later the figure contracts again, as Woolf envisions the ideal reader for modern literature, whom she refers to repeatedly as “the patron” and “him” (CR 1 1984: 208–10). This hybrid construct emphasizes the modern writer’s comparatively complicated situation, and signals a nostalgia for an imagined, immediate exchange between reader and writer. Woolf writes that we cannot recapture the “enviably simple” conditions of earlier print cultures; we can only look back “applauding the splendid results of these different alliances” (CR 1 1984: 206). Tellingly, Woolf omits the existence in her marketplace of actual, flesh-and-blood patrons such as those who underwrote the initial appearances of “The Patron and The Crocus.” The problem, perhaps, is that modern patrons do not function like the idealized, past patrons Woolf envisions: they are funders, but not primary consumers, of the art they underwrite and thus cannot be accommodated to Woolf’s figure. That the essay appeared first in two similar periodicals—each carrying advertising and a relatively high copy price while being, to most readers, invisibly underwritten by actual patrons—serves as an instance of the complexity of a periodical culture incompletely converted to a fully commercial marketplace.

How (and Why) Should One Read Woolf on (and in) Periodicals?

The continuing role of patronage is one aspect of the period’s print culture that remains substantially untheorized. In that Woolf’s “The Patron and the Crocus” subtly foregrounds patronage, a covert force in the very periodicals in which it appears, it stands as an instance of what Woolf studies offers to periodical studies. Woolf was, in addition
to the brilliant novelist whose claims first attracted our attention, a penetrating observer of the complex mediations of early twentieth-century print culture, if not as “disinterested” a viewer as we might think. Reading the periodicals in which she appears as primary texts and her contributions as elements of those texts means forgoing such meta-narratives as “the development in Woolf’s thinking” (McVicker, Part II 141) and instead elucidating the local continuities, tensions, and contradictions that shed light on the periodical at hand and gesture beyond it to the larger print culture. Re-situating “The Patron and the Crocus” in this way emphasizes not Woolf’s uniqueness but her continuity with the intellectual critique of the press that was a leading motif of the New Republic and the N&A, as well as the way in which the bibliographic coding of both periodicals contextualizes and reinforces that critique. At the same time, the contrast in Woolf’s essay between her careful delineation of the complexly mediated periodical marketplace and her romantic vision of author-reader intimacy foregrounds questions we might apply to the New Republic and the N&A, questions concerning their cultural function as particular kinds of mediators. Woolf’s evocation of patronage begs the question of how these periodicals were funded—a question their retro-Victorian bibliographic coding arguably seeks to obscure. While the bibliographic codes effectively assert a place in the print hierarchy, the appearance in their pages of Woolf, a writer so usefully and richly both idealist and realist, mystic and materialist, problematizes that placement, leading us to the ways in which these periodical texts are, like the “imaginative works” Woolf discusses in A Room of One’s Own, “attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in” (42).

But this brief reading of two of Woolf’s periodical publications has raised only a few of the problematics of periodical studies. In finding continuities between Chester Crowell’s short story and Woolf’s essay, for instance, I may or may not be re-creating an operation performed by individual, historical readers. Periodicals, as any magazine reader knows, tend to be read incompletely and inconsecutively: common sense suggests that some consumers of the New Republic read both Crowell and Woolf, some read one or the other, and some (perhaps many, given the paper’s emphasis on politics and economics) read neither. While these precise dynamics are unrecoverable, they do require a self-consciousness on the part of scholars: an understanding that, in fact, we are using these periodicals in ways entirely distinct from those of their original readers. Periodical study requires an acute awareness of the historical contingency of our reading—the notion that we are
always doing a new and historically determined reading, in effect creating a text that was not available to original readers. Of course, such self-consciousness should inform our readings of “literary texts” as well; one of the benefits of reading historical periodicals lies in the way they foreground the mediated nature of printed texts, breaking the seductive illusion of intimacy between writer and reader we seek in books. Indeed, books foment this illusion because they are the default location of “serious” reading and thus their bibliographic codes, though effective, are largely invisible to us. Conversely, we are tempted—perhaps required—to take liberties with periodicals that we would never take with literary texts: my readings here are based on extremely partial readings of the New Republic and N&A, careful but directed samplings of short periods of their runs, backed up with some historical research. Surely, however, no self-respecting literary scholar would make any interpretive generalizations about a novel without having read every word. This leads to another crucial question about periodical studies: how do we define the periodical as text? What are the boundaries of the text—the article? the issue? the run under a particular editor? the periodical’s entire run? These questions emphasize that studying periodicals is fundamentally different from studying novels and poems. At this moment in critical history, I would argue, studying periodicals is also more important than studying novels and poems, or, more precisely, more important than studying the same novels and poems we have been writing about for decades.

Woolf has been justly celebrated for her theorization of reading—its pleasures, its forms, its politics. It is a mark of her moment, her class position, her background, herself that this theorization rarely extends in such a satisfying way to the most common kind of reading in her historical time and place: reading in newspapers and periodicals. There is a telling moment in “The Lives of the Obscure” (another work that appeared in periodical and book form) in which Woolf evokes a visit to a library to read old and forgotten memoirs. As her fictional reader goes straight for the desk to request books, she passes a group of periodical readers: “The elderly, the marooned, the bored, drift from newspaper to newspaper, or sit holding their heads over back numbers of The Illustrated London News and the Wesleyan Chronicle” (CR 1 1984: 106). In contrast to these abject readers, the reader hailed in the essay, the book reader, is figured as a more vivid, lively “nocturnal rambler among forgotten worthies” (CR 1 1984: 113). But in these bypassed readers “holding their heads over back numbers” I see foreshadowed the scholars who are today finding in early twentieth-century periodical studies a vital and endlessly
engaging, if young and thus methodologically problematic, contribution to the study of early twentieth-century culture. Pursuing it with due diligence is going to require the sort of readerly self-consciousness, care, even pleasure that Woolf encourages in the readers she addresses in *The Common Reader*. But it will also require that we read against the grain of Woolf’s treatment of periodicals, and ask that she share, and sometimes step out of, the spotlight.

**Notes**

1. For a discussion of the founding of academic English studies on the “subjugation” of journalism and periodicals, see Brake, *Subjugated*, “Introduction” and Chapter 1. Brake writes: “In the desire to establish English as an academic subject, it was attempted to sever the links between literature and journalism, and to obscure their intimate material involvement and intertextuality in the period” (xiv).

2. Daugherty, Staveley, Dickens, Wood, and Sullivan are among the scholars whose current projects examine Woolf’s work in periodicals. For discussions of the rise of periodical studies, see Latham and Scholes, and Brake’s “On Print Culture.” For work in print that considers Woolf’s attitudes toward and practice of journalism, see Dubino, Lee, Westman, Brosnan, Collier (Chapter 3), and Garrity. Garrity usefully shifts the focus away from Woolf herself to the representation of Bloomsbury in *Vogue*.


4. What the newspaper actually holds for Isa is the story of a girl molested by a group of soldiers.

5. A case in point is “The Lives of the Obscure,” discussed briefly below. An essay under that title appeared in the *London Mercury* in June 1924. That essay constitutes one-third of the essay of the same title in *The Common Reader*, and lacks the framing paragraph which, in the volume, helps readers make sense of its figurative language. Considering that Woolf was hard at work on *The Common Reader* by June 1924, it seems likely that the *London Mercury* essay was initially envisioned as part of *The Common Reader* and parcelled off into the *London Mercury*.

6. This is much less the case in Victorian studies, which is why I take so much of the spirit of my argument here from figures such as Pykett, Brake, Erickson, and other scholars of Victorian Britain.

7. See Latham.

8. The “Author’s Note” for the American edition names specifically only the TLS and the *Dial*, then continues, “some are based upon articles written for various newspapers, while others appear here for the first time” (*CR* 1 1953: vii).

9. Considering that Woolf was at work on *The Common Reader* when she wrote “The Patron and the Crocus,” and considering that Leonard Woolf was literary editor at the N&А (and thus would have been likely to accommodate Woolf writing to her own interest), it seems likely that Woolf conceived this particular essay independent of its periodical context. That is clearly not the case with some *Common Reader* essays, particularly those that first saw light as TLS leaders in the late 1910s, such as “Modern Novels,” “DeFoe,” and “Addison.”

10. See Ardis on the *New Age*; and Morrisson on the *English Review*, *The Freewoman*, and *Masses*.

11. Rainey examines, but by no means exhausts, this topic. See also Sawaya, who looks at Andrew Carnegie’s subsidization of British periodicals as a test case in “how modern print culture was funded” (83).
12. For a thorough, recent consideration of the centrality of “disinterestedness” in Woolf’s understanding of free speech and the public sphere, see Froula; see also Cuddy-Keane.

13. The phrase is from McVicker’s “‘Six Essays on London Life’: A History of Dispersal.” The essay is illustrative in its examination of six periodical essays (which appeared in Good Housekeeping) for the purpose of clarifying “a vague but significant in-between moment of transition in Woolf’s focus,” and thus “marking an important bridge between The Waves and The Pargiters” (Part II, 145). I quote it not to criticize McVicker’s original and theoretically complex essay but to point up its very common, relatively unexamined assumption that fine details of Woolf’s thinking, as they point toward fruition in book form, may occupy the critical foreground of a lengthy essay, while the periodical occupies the more marginal position of “context.”

14. See Cuddy-Keane for one of the most comprehensive analyses of Woolf’s interventions in cultural debates about reading. For a more recent article proceeding from a similar understanding of Woolf’s theory of reading, see Lilienfeld.

Works Cited


On 23 October 1929, the eve of its publication, Virginia Woolf voiced concern over the reception of *A Room of One’s Own*. In her diary she worried that there was “a shrill feminine tone in it which [her] intimate friends” would “dislike” and that she would be “attacked for a feminist & hinted at for a sapphist” (*D 3*: 262). She predicted that the press would “be kind & talk of its charm, & sprightliness.” She feared that *A Room* would not be taken “seriously” (262) and that critics would proclaim it “a book to be put in the hands of girls,” rather than read by an audience who appreciated the intellectual nature of her work and supported women’s writing and education. Ironically, though, at the very moment that Woolf was afraid that the importance of her work would be overshadowed by the conversational and, at times, humorous tone of *A Room*, she was also portrayed increasingly as a “highbrow” detached from the general reading public and isolated in an elite, static, and narrow Bloomsbury world by critics such as Q. D. Leavis and Gerald Bullet.¹

Less than two weeks later, Woolf’s anxieties were alleviated. She recorded that she had “done quite well so far with R. of one’s Own,” and was pleased with both the sales and the “unexpected letters” she received in support of her work (*D 3*: 264). This initial apprehension about *A Room’s* reviews and potential reading public, however,
illustrates Woolf’s desires to position her essay as a serious contribution to women’s literary criticism and history and to encourage readers and critics outside of her closest friends to engage in debates and theoretical discussions about the text.

In an attempt to overcome her uneasiness over reaching a broad feminist readership, Woolf published two brief excerpts of *A Room of One’s Own* in the 22 and 29 November 1929 editions of *Time and Tide*, a weekly review known for its commitment to politics, literature, the arts, and, above all, feminist interests. This decision situated her work in a literary community of high and middlebrow women writers who contributed regularly to the periodical and guided the reception of *A Room of One’s Own* toward a broad range of the reading public. While *Time and Tide* occupied a fluid position between the high and middlebrow spheres, the editors of the periodical, much like Woolf herself, grappled with cultural divides in an effort both to appeal to a variety of readers and to promote feminism. Indeed, as tensions mounted over cultural hierarchies throughout the 1920s and the early 1930s, the work of Virginia Woolf and *Time and Tide* became contested spaces where the value system governing the “battle of the brows” was challenged and refigured.

As a high and middlebrow publication, *Time and Tide* provided Woolf with a space both to enact the relationships among communities of women writers and to instruct readers and critics on how to read the evolution of a women’s literary tradition. By publishing excerpts from *A Room* in *Time and Tide*, Woolf sought to enlarge her audience, and to that end implicitly argued that her supposedly “difficult” (Bullett 145) writing should be read in conversation along with its playful, satiric, intellectual, and feminist articles. In this group of intellectual, academic, and middlebrow women writing to an expansive reading public, Woolf aligned herself with her female contemporaries at the moment of her first extended nonfiction publication on gender, economics, and cultural hierarchies. Woolf thus used the complexity of *Time and Tide*’s shifting role in the literary public sphere to refigure her own cultural capital, to guide the reception of *A Room of One’s Own*, and to suggest alternative methods of mapping the interwar literary public sphere.

**Cultural Hierarchies, Taste, and Virginia Woolf**

Debates over cultural hierarchies during the late 1920s and the early 1930s addressed the boundaries among the high, middle, and lowbrow
spheres, but also raised questions concerning audience, taste, and marketing. This “battle of the brows,” as Melba Cuddy-Keane aptly puts it, was “a fight for readership, on the one side, and a fight for respect and legitimization, on the other” (21). The female and highbrow Woolf complicates this paradigm; “it is possible to read Woolf’s fiction as part of a continuum with that of other women writers of the period,” as Nicola Humble maintains, but Woolf also held a far more privileged or elite position in the literary public sphere (27). Yet despite her status as a highbrow “icon,” Woolf did grapple with the fact that middlebrow culture, as Brenda Silver reminds us, is “linked in our cultural topographies as the feminine” (71). And, perhaps more importantly, Woolf took advantage of her dueling affinities to refigure the cultural capital of the high and middlebrow spheres and to attract a wide and dynamic reading public.

By 1929, Woolf had attained a significant amount of cultural capital, which enabled her to enact new ways of reading the field of cultural production and to demonstrate the links between her own work and that of her fellow interwar women writers. Woolf calls for the recognition of such relationships among all women writers in A Room when she insists that masterpieces “are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common” (AROO 65). Yet without Time and Tide, her position in the literary field appeared to be further removed from those of her female peers. As Leila Brosnan argues, even the “journalism that she characterised as low” was “in the main . . . written for a cultured audience” (71). By deliberately crossing cultural divides and challenging the reading public to do the same in Time and Tide, Woolf raised the cultural positions of interwar women writers, even as she broadened her own position in the field of cultural production toward the middlebrow sphere. Woolf’s work with Time and Tide thus illustrates that she was not only a “democratic highbrow” (Cuddy-Keane 13) who encouraged common readers to enjoy intellectual work, but also a supporter of a lively women’s intellectual and popular culture who endorsed reading across cultural, class, and educational divides.

**The Literary “Salon” of Time and Tide**

Woolf’s transition from the Hogarth Press and more elite periodicals was not, however, seamless, for the cultural capital of Time and Tide was broader and more erratic than that of Virginia Woolf. Although
**Time and Tide** was developed to incorporate a wide range of voices, it struggled to navigate the borders between the high and middlebrow spheres throughout the 1920s. From its start in May 1920, **Time and Tide**, the “review with independent views,” addressed current issues in politics, literature, and the arts, but also wrestled with economic difficulties and its efforts to integrate an expanded range of public culture. Lady Rhondda, the founder of **Time and Tide**, and its editor from 1926 until her death in 1958, insisted that the periodical should serve as a “‘salon’” (qtd. in Eoff 127) for discussions among leading women writers on politics, literature, the economy, history the arts, fashion, and travel, to name just a few of the many topics that appeared in the review. According to Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, Lady Rhondda hoped to “give educated women an influential public voice” so that they could take advantage of their increasing freedom and rights after World War I (223).

To do so, **Time and Tide** needed to attract a broad reading public that would respond to the innovative and dynamic work found in the review. As Eoff explains, “**Time and Tide** frequently advertised for the right type of audience,” or those whom Lady Rhondda considered to be “people who enjoy intelligent, detached comment on current political events, good literary articles, and critical and discriminating reading” (129). Lady Rhondda’s quest to reach this “‘keystone public who ultimately directed the multitude’” (qtd. in Eoff 118) suggests that **Time and Tide** was developed for a somewhat elite audience, but the diverse array of articles on political, economic, and educational issues, as well as the reviews of high and middlebrow literature, music, and theater, indicate that Lady Rhondda’s understanding of a “keystone public” was far more inclusive than the prevailing portraits of the divide between the “intellectuals” and the “masses.”

In the first edition of **Time and Tide** in May 1920, the editors explained that this weekly periodical was developed to “supply a definite need” for an “independent press” after the “great whirlwind” of World War I, women’s suffrage, the waning of the British Empire, and more. From the start, **Time and Tide** was set apart from periodicals that revolved around fashion, household affairs, or other issues that marked women as “consumers,” but its editors and writers were also careful not to disavow women’s interests for the sake of appealing to an exclusive reading public (Eoff 119). It was not economically self-sufficient until 1933, and Lady Rhondda spent approximately £500,000 subsidizing it over the course of her lifetime (Clay 52).
Time and Tide’s inclusiveness, on topics ranging from gardening and fashion to literature and birth control, anticipated Woolf’s request for women writers to “write all kinds of books, hesitating at no subject however trivial or however vast” in order to satisfy the wants of broad reading public, in which she included herself (AROO 109). The editors of and contributors to Time and Tide also insisted upon showing that women writers and the reading public who enjoyed Time and Tide were capable of moving across high and middlebrow divides. As Tusun explains, the review “provided women with a space to engage in debates over accepted cultural values [and] challenged the mainstream press to see them as serious consumers of news and ideas” (229). Throughout the 1920s, Lady Rhondda and the editors of Time and Tide struggled to develop a popular, playful, and intellectual identity for the periodical. They experimented with their layouts, feature articles, advertisements, and leading writers, and eventually positioned themselves in a precarious borderland space between the high and middlebrow spheres. Within a single issue readers could find an essay by Virginia Woolf or a poem by D. H. Lawrence juxtaposed next to a parody by the popular writer E. M. Delafield or an article by the suffragist Cicely Hamilton. Articles which mocked upper-class social structures or fashion were often found alongside advertisements for Harvey Nichols, and critical discussions on modern literature were followed by advertisements for popular book clubs.

While Lady Rhondda and the editors of Time and Tide were dedicated to developing a “highbrow quality” for the review throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, as Catherine Clay puts it, they were also careful not to reject their ties to women’s middlebrow culture or their needs for a wide range of advertisements and readers (Clay 17). On 23 March 1928, for example, an anonymous author playfully lamented the fact that Time and Tide was simply “too Highbrow” and that readers were desperate for more “social news” (“In the Tideway”). Yet this self-positioning in the highbrow sphere contrasted sharply with the fact that it appeared within the satiric weekly editorial, “In the Tideway,” by “North Wind.” The review’s audience would have both recognized that Time and Tide contributed to intellectual or highbrow conversations on literature, the arts, and politics, but also would have noticed the tongue-in-cheek and middlebrow nature of much of its comic content, including this self-proclaimed highbrow identity.

These dual loyalties enabled Time and Tide to refine the role of the press in the interwar literary public sphere. The editors proclaimed their rising presence in the literary field and changes in periodicals
through a series of articles entitled “The Future of the Press” during the winter and spring of 1928, which was complemented by a debate on “Women in the Press” led by the Six Point Group on 27 March 1928. Their work supports Bonnie Kime Scott’s observation that the year 1928 was an “active, exploratory period, when it was clear that women writers were developing a new sense of the literary world and setting their own objectives” (183); writers such as Rebecca West, Rose Macaulay, and Winifred Holtby participated in these quests both in their novels and in *Time and Tide*. In addition, *Time and Tide* recognized its readers as participants in the formation of new styles and practices. The 9 March 1928 installment of “The Future of the Press,” Wickham Steed’s “The Power of the Public,” considered how reading preferences evolved after the Great War and suggested that ten years later the public’s tastes were once again changing as the traumas of war were subsiding. Steed declared that “enquiry into the future of the press is enquiry into the future of the public,” without any fear that the press would be tarnished or contaminated by the demands and interests of the reading public. He also predicted that in the future newspapers would be run on a model similar to that of *Time and Tide*: they “will have to be produced by a team—possibly on a cooperative basis—its editor being a team-leader, serving a policy jointly accepted and vigorously pursued” (221).

One year later, in May 1929, *Time and Tide* moved its main office from Fleet Street to Bloomsbury. The editors of the review did not celebrate their arrival in this space that at this point was nearly, in Anthea Trodd’s words, “synonymous with the highbrow” (49) by emphasizing the publication’s highbrow qualities of intelligence, wit, and innovation, or relationships with Bloomsbury writers such as Virginia Woolf. Instead, in “Moving House,” the anonymous author reinforces “subtle bond of intimacy established between the paper and its readers.” Rather than representing a sterile portrait of the exterior frontage from the public street, the article’s accompanying “pen and ink drawing from the garden” offered readers an intimate view of the new premises: they are invited to look into the writers’ and editors’ private spaces. Instead of ostracizing their middlebrow reading public or championing their highbrow contributors, *Time and Tide* positioned its readers as “intelligent people” capable of moving, like the periodical itself, into Bloomsbury with humor and aplomb. And it was this “keystone public” and this deliberate fluctuation across cultural divides that helped Virginia Woolf navigate the reception of *A Room of One’s Own*. 
Woolf’s initial revision of her October 1928 Cambridge lectures, “Women and Fiction,” contrasted sharply to Time and Tide’s two excerpts of A Room of One’s Own in content and in form. The March 1929 publication of “Women and Fiction” in The Forum called for new research on the history of women’s literature, argued that women’s financial and social constraints impeded their literary output, and illustrated the underlying “anger” in nineteenth-century female “geniuses” such as George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë. Woolf also maintained that despite persistent challenges, in 1929 “the average novel by a woman is far more genuine and far more interesting” than in the past, and that the future may hold a “golden” or perhaps “fabulous age when women will [have] … leisure, and money, and a room to themselves” (“Women and Fiction” 183). This essay was presented to readers as a major contribution to women’s literary history by the editors of The Forum. The layout of the pages of “Women and Fiction” featured portraits of prestigious woman writers, including Jane Austen, George Sand, and Sappho. Woolf was thus clearly positioned as their peer, and her arguments on “genius” and “masterpieces” overshadowed her discussions of all “women’s fiction at the present moment” at the essay’s conclusion (183). The advertisement which followed Woolf’s essay simply stated that “next month, an essay on poetry by the distinguished French critic, Paul Valéry” will appear in The Forum (183), an act which indicated that Woolf’s essay was also marketed as high literary criticism, and that the editors hoped to distinguish The Forum further through this publication.

On 24 October 1929 the Hogarth Press released A Room of One’s Own. Woolf, of course, expanded “Women and Fiction” significantly by developing her important work on women’s literary tradition, education, economics, and androgyny. But she also created a playful and, at times, comic text which was far more comparable to her female contemporaries’ work in Time and Tide than the original. In A Room Woolf gallantly proclaimed, “I do not believe that gifts, whether of mind or character, can be weighted like sugar and butter” (105), and thereby openly defied high, middle, and lowbrow proponents of cultural divides. Reviews of A Room, however, tended to overshadow Woolf’s assertion that there were, in the words of her contemporary Rose Macaulay, “no fixed standards in taste” (39), in favor of further emphasizing a distinction between Woolf and her fellow women writers. Arthur Sydney McDowall’s review of A Room in the Times Literary
Supplement (TLS), for example, called the text a “delightfully peripatetic essay.” Yet McDowall also claimed that Woolf had a “masculine sense of literary form” and thus implicitly argued that *A Room* should not be positioned alongside the work of Woolf’s female contemporaries. When *A Room* was reviewed by Theodora Bosanquet in *Time and Tide*, Woolf was instead portrayed as a leading figure in a community of women writers and readers, with a keen understanding of the economic, educational, and artistic challenges faced by her peers. At the conclusion, Bosanquet celebrates the fact that Woolf’s “genius” has not “needed a hundred years,” and that she “can carry her readers with her.” In emphasizing Woolf’s relationship with her readers, Bosanquet refined the cultural capital of Woolf, *Time and Tide*, its contributors, and its reading public. Woolf was still considered to be a prestigious author, but also one who could appeal to a wide readership, while *Time and Tide*, its reading public, and its high and middlebrow women writers were aligned with the highbrow sphere.

By publishing two excerpts of *A Room of One’s Own* in *Time and Tide*, Woolf guided the reception of her essay by demonstrating that she too saw her work participating in this publication’s discussions on gender, literature, readership, and cultural hierarchies. *Time and Tide*’s complex efforts to negotiate the tensions surrounding the “battle of the brows” provided a dynamic and evolving space for Woolf to speak out against the inequalities between the educations of men and women and their current roles in the literary public sphere. When Woolf published in *Time and Tide*, she did so knowing that she would risk her cultural capital in the eyes of some critics. Locating her work in the middlebrow sphere demonstrates her desire to align herself with her female contemporaries and to challenge the cultural hierarchies that marginalized her fellow women writers.

In its first installment in *Time and Tide*, *A Room* appeared alongside advertisements for the writer Naomi Mitchison, Cicely Hamilton, “Viyella” flannel “intimate wear,” and Cadbury’s milk chocolate, and followed the weekly “Notes on the Way,” a comic editorial. The 22 November issue also included discussions on unemployment, the memorial service for Dame Millicent Fawcett, and tensions between Britain and Russia; the weekly writing contest; and advertisements for Marshall & Snelgrove, the elite Warings Antiques, and the National Magazine Company’s *Nash’s Christmas Number*. Amid this assortment of articles and advertisements from the popular, intellectual, and political spheres, Woolf skillfully addressed three issues that figured
prominently in the pages of *Time and Tide*: economics, education, and women’s literary history.

The 22 November excerpt from *A Room* begins with the narrator walking through Oxbridge as an outsider denied access to its libraries and grounds. As Melba Cuddy-Keane explains, in *A Room* Woolf “condemned the hierarchical rankings of the academic establishment” and sought to emphasize the parallels between her own limited education and that of countless other women of her generation (167–68). Woolf’s arguments on gender and inequities in the university were further supported and complicated by this publication in *Time and Tide*, for this “salon” and its “keystone” public reflected her thesis. Unlike Woolf, prominent contributors to the review such as Winifred Holtby, Vera Brittain, and Rose Macaulay were educated at Oxford, yet these women writers were often forced to support themselves through popular journalism and bestselling novels circumscribed by the whims of their editors. Even with their history degrees, their Oxbridge education left them struggling to negotiate cultural and economic hierarchies. Woolf’s discussion on the “unending stream of gold and silver” poured into “ancient fists” to support the men’s colleges over the centuries further emphasized the economic disparities between men’s and women’s educations, but also the limited career opportunities available to recipients of those educations (Woolf, “Excerpt” 1403). When Woolf launches into her description of delicate soles draped in cream, decadent partridges, a rich roast, and a luxurious dessert at a men’s college, the sharp contrast between such indulgent material comforts and the financial constraints facing women’s colleges, women writers, and *Time and Tide* becomes especially pronounced.

Despite the journal’s self-professed highbrow status, the offices in Bloomsbury, and the occasional articles and poems by prestigious writers, *Time and Tide* was still supported by advertisements for practical Viyella flannels, “Acceptable Yuletide Gifts” of needlepoint purses and pillows, and chic but affordable women’s clothing. Few of its “daughters of educated men” had the independent incomes for which Woolf advocated, and most, like Mary Carmichael of *A Room*, were at one time an “unknown girl writing her first novel in a bed-sitting room, without enough . . . time, money, and idleness” (*AROO* 94). By following *A Room* with Naomi Mitchison’s “Nothing Over Much,” a historical short story about an adulterous love affair, *Time and Tide* effectively illustrated Woolf’s relationships with contemporary women writers and
instructed the reading public to consider both writers as participants in a women’s “shared public culture” (Levine 233), in turn leading to the next sister of Shakespeare.

The 29 November excerpt of *A Room of One’s Own* begins almost immediately with dinner at Fernham. In this woman’s college the meal is sparse, the china is plain, and few comforts are available to the students. This selection focuses predominantly on the narrator’s description of “what lies beneath” Fernham’s foundation and the tremendous efforts required to raise adequate funds for this women’s college (Woolf, “Excerpt” 1434). Woolf’s delineations of women’s economic and career limitations during the nineteenth century echoes the writing on women, employment, and the economy in *Time and Tide* during the 1920s. Her portrait of the inadequate resources available to contemporary women as a result of such economic restraints in the pages of *Time and Tide* showed Woolf’s readers and fellow contributors that this supposedly elitist highbrow was in reality fully aware of the limitations that her female contemporaries faced, as well as their difficulties in crossing cultural hierarchies when many of their career choices were based on financial necessities. Mary Seton’s description of the “prodigious effort” to found women’s colleges—“rooms were hired. Committees met. Envelopes were addressed. Circulars were drawn up”—sounds similar to the communal work to establish and maintain *Time and Tide* (Woolf, “Excerpt” 1435).

At the conclusion of Woolf’s discussion on economics and education during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, readers are left to consider “what effect poverty has on the mind; and what effect wealth has on the mind” (Woolf, “Excerpt” 1436). For Woolf, both poverty and the traditions which generally accompany wealth limit the intellectual freedom needed to produce works of “genius.” And just as Mary Carmichael’s *Life’s Adventure* in *A Room* is an important step toward a modern Judith Shakespeare, so too does the Sylvia Townsend Warner poem below the second excerpt from *A Room* in *Time and Tide* illustrate progress in women’s writing. As Woolf recounts in *A Room*, for women writers the “original impulse was to poetry,” yet when “the middle-class women took to writing,” their time, economic, and spatial constraints led them to write novels (*AROO* 67). By 1929, many of these problems persisted; writers such as Sylvia Townsend Warner, Rose Macaulay, and Stella Benson found that the financial success of their novels and the negligible critical acclaim for their poetry severely impaired their careers as poets (Clay 146). Yet in *Time and Tide*, Warner could publish “The Absence” directly after Woolf and enact the type
of writing that Woolf advocated throughout *A Room*, and which she saw as a part of a literary tradition shared by women across cultural hierarchies.

*Time and Tide* did not publish readers’ letters on *A Room*, but Woolf heard directly from women who, no matter what level of education or profession, expressed gratitude, enjoyment, and appreciation. While one reader considered herself an outsider to *A Room*’s intended audience because she had not “had every advantage,” she also told Woolf that she was reaching “those who labour under every disability of which you write” (Daugherty 81). Woolf saved letters from readers who emphasized the “acute pleasure” such an exciting text gave them (Daugherty 65). Issues of literary pleasure and delight were key factors in much highbrow denigration of middlebrow and popular culture, and so by keeping these responses, Woolf indicated that she sought both to challenge and to entertain her readers. Such aims directly paralleled those of *Time and Tide*, for its comic, satiric, political, and literary articles were designed to appeal to the multifaceted interests and tastes of its readership.

At a time when she was cast increasingly as a difficult highbrow, or, as J. B. Priestley nastily said in 1927, the “Medusa” of Bloomsbury “whose very image might turn [his] pen to stone” (165), Woolf argued that her own work should be situated within high and middlebrow cultures simultaneously and helped to refigure the cultural capital of herself, *Time and Tide*, and contemporary women writers and readers in the literary public sphere. These self-positionings demonstrate how seemingly rigid cultural divides could be crossed and defied, but also show that the reading public was able and willing to do so as well. Indeed, by addressing the diverse “keystone public” which *Time and Tide* helped to assemble, Woolf used her own highbrow status both to show that the cultural capital of readers and writers continually fluctuated across the supposed “great divide” and to create a fluid and shifting remapping of the literary public sphere.

**Notes**

1. By the late 1920s many portraits existed of Virginia Woolf as a resolute “highbrow,” detached from popular culture, as Q. D. Leavis would imagine her (61), or a “difficult” writer who would never be popular within her own lifetime, despite prolific “amount[s] of booming,” as Gerald Bullett proclaimed (145).

2. Virginia Woolf was not a leading figure within *Time and Tide*, although she did also publish “The Sun and the Fish” on 3 February 1928. As Catherine Clay explains, Woolf occasionally attended Lady Rhondda’s “public and private receptions” as well (12).
3. *The Forum*, a monthly periodical based in New York, was edited by Henry Goddard Leach and included a prestigious array of contributors. The magazine was printed on good-quality paper and, unlike *Time and Tide*, the advertisements appeared within the front matter, rather than being dispersed throughout the periodical.

4. *Time and Tide* first developed this layout design in 1928, and the advertisements for clothing, chocolate or silks were rarely missing from the front page.

**Works Cited**


The “Keystone Public” and Virginia Woolf


CHAPTER ELEVEN

“Murdering an Aunt or Two”: Textual Practice and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf’s Metropolitan Market

JOHN K. YOUNG

As evidence for the multiple connections between the commercial and intellectual freedoms provided by the Hogarth Press for its co-owner and leading author, consider a diary entry from September 1925:

How my hand writing goes down hill! Another sacrifice to the Hogarth Press. Yet what I owe the Hogarth Press is barely paid by the whole of my handwriting…. I’m the only woman in England free to write what I like. The others must be thinking of series’ & editors. Yesterday I heard from Harcourt Brace that Mrs. D & C.R. are selling 148 & 73 weekly—Isn’t that a surprising rate for the 4th month? Doesn’t it portend a bathroom & a w.c. either here, or Southease? (D 3: 42–43)

Virginia Woolf was free to write what she liked because of her books’ sales in the United Kingdom and the United States, and, simultaneously, because no editor (with the very occasional exception of Leonard) interfered with her authorial choices.1 As this passage shows as well, Woolf’s royalties represented more mundane freedoms—a bathroom renovation portended by the American sales of Mrs. Dalloway and the first Common Reader, and two years later the Woolfs’ first car, financed by the sales of To the Lighthouse.
More significantly, the Hogarth Press functioned as a professional sphere in which Woolf’s work as writer, editor, and publisher overlapped and intersected. While most scholars have emphasized the importance of the Press in Woolf’s authorial development, or more occasionally, as an emotional respite provided by the act of setting type by hand, few have actually considered Woolf herself as an editor and publisher. But thanks to the Press, Woolf could not only write what she liked, she and Leonard could also publish her books as they liked and shape their publication list as it appeared in Britain. Finally, the publishing choices Leonard and Virginia made, especially once Hogarth shifted from its handpress origins to its more commercial horizons in the later 1920s and through the 1930s, generated further freedoms for Woolf the author. The extraordinary sales (by Hogarth standards) of Vita Sackville-West’s The Edwardians (1930), or of C. H. B. Kitchin’s murder mystery Death of My Aunt (1929), coincided with Woolf’s own commercial successes in Orlando and A Room of One's Own, and directly preceded her most experimental (and least accessible) publication, The Waves. As Lee Erickson concludes, “literature is materially and economically embedded in the reality of the publishing marketplace” (8). While most authors work with and/or against their publishers in an effort to attain the “momentary equilibrium between the aspirations of writers and the desires of their audiences” (Erickson 8), Woolf as her own publisher was uniquely positioned to adapt her books’ forms and dissemination to a keen sense of her British and American audiences.

Against this historical backdrop, I explore the relationship between textual practice and narrative form in Woolf’s career, asking how her experiences as an editor and publisher shaped the kinds of texts she produced as an author, and how her search for authorial freedom informed her practices as a publisher. That is, my approach to Virginia Woolf and the literary marketplace takes up that relationship both through Woolf the self-published author and through Woolf the editor and co-publisher of many other significant modernist texts. This approach asks how Woolf responded as an author to the desires of the British reading public, and how she helped “set the field,” in George Bornstein’s terms, of modern fiction in Britain and beyond during the 1920s and 1930s, “both by deciding what works came to the public and by determining the form in which those works appeared” (“Why” 2).

After offering a more extensive survey of Woolf’s work as a publisher, I focus specifically on an example of Woolf representing textual production, both as an author and as a self-publisher, asking why in A Room of One’s Own Woolf’s narrator represents her economic and
intellectual freedom not as the result of her professional income, but instead as the legacy of an aunt who “died by a fall from her horse when she was riding out to take the air in Bombay” (37). This comment, along with the Room narrator’s remarks about passing a “very fine Negress,” have been the subject of much critical commentary; Jane Marcus insists, for example, that the reference to British imperialism is a “conscious move on Virginia Woolf’s part” to demonstrate that the room of one’s own “has been bought with blood money” (Hearts 42). I see this issue as more complicated, or rather differently complicated, than Marcus, for not only is Woolf here signaling her own inevitable implication in the colonialist system, but she is doing so by masking Hogarth’s commercial success, which by 1929 was generating for her considerably more than £500 a year. Reading Room along these lines demonstrates the important ways in which Woolf’s methods of modernist textual production are always expressive across and through her authorial and editorial roles.

**Reading Virginia Woolf as a Publisher**

Woolf worked not as an author isolated from textual production but as one immersed in what she once called “life on tap down here whenever it flags upstairs” (D 4: 63), an elegant reminder that 52 Tavistock Square housed both the creative and business spaces for the Woolfs. From her early work setting type by hand for Hogarth publications to her later, prodigious labors as a de facto fiction editor, Woolf made myriad material contributions to the development of the Press from a coterie imprint designed for the Woolfs and their friends to an established, more or less mainstream firm. As Hogarth’s fiction editor, Woolf helped usher into print more than fifty novels and short story collections between 1917 and 1938, when John Lehmann bought out her share of the firm. As J. H. Willis notes, “the number of fiction and poetry manuscripts submitted each month no doubt far exceeded the total in all other genres, so that Virginia’s contribution to the press as reader was enormous” (370).4 The Hogarth list during this period included Woolf’s own major contributions to modernism as well as such notable texts as: Katherine Mansfield’s “Prelude,” F. M. Mayor’s The Rector’s Daughter, William Plomer’s Turbott Wolfe and The Case Is Altered, Italo Svevo’s The Hoax, Vita Sackville-West’s The Edwardians and All Passion Spent, John Hampson’s Saturday Night at the Greyhound, and Christopher Isherwood’s The Memorial and Berlin stories. Even
John K. Young

more powerfully than T. S. Eliot at Faber & Faber, I would argue, the Woolfs influenced the course of British modernist fiction, opening Hogarth and its readers to a variety of literary perspectives outside the mainstream: Russian fiction by I. A. Bunin and Yuri Olesha, attacks on South African racism by Plomer and Laurens van der Post, Continental modernism from Svevo, homosexual narratives by Plomer and Isherwood, a working-class story by Hampson, and feminist satires by Sackville-West and Julia Strachey.

Leonard reviewed every submission, including fiction, and produced almost all of Hogarth’s correspondence with its prospective authors. This arrangement has often created the impression that Virginia generally served more as a reader than as an actual editor, simply approving or rejecting submissions rather than providing more specific critiques. Hermione Lee, for example, calls Hogarth’s “editorial acumen (mostly, but not entirely, Leonard’s),” while acknowledging that Virginia’s “taste, her decisions, and her influence are part” of Hogarth’s history, even if she “was not the Press’s main editor” (367). But a lack of historical evidence does not necessarily support this conclusion; it seems entirely reasonable to conclude that Leonard’s letters combined his own and Virginia’s responses to manuscripts under consideration. As Catherine Hollis suggests, we should consider the Press as a deeply collaborative enterprise. Not only should we understand Woolf as a socialized author then, but also as a socialized editor. All Hogarth books read “Published by Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press,” a literal description of their mutual endeavor.

In addition, Virginia occasionally consulted with Leonard and Lehmann about advertising, as a 1927 diary note indicates: “here L. comes in & we spend fifteen minutes discussing advertisements. The L. [To the Lighthouse] has sold 2,200 & we are reprinting” (D 3: 136). Woolf’s business contributions sometimes extended to packaging and shipping as well, as with Sackville-West’s Family History in 1932 and her own Orlando. Of the latter, Richard Kennedy recalls that “Mrs W is a pretty fast worker considering she’s not a professional like Miss Belcher and myself” (56). Similarly, Lehmann writes that when “a book boomed and orders were heavy, [Woolf] would often join Miss Belsher, Miss Strachan and Miss Walton in the front office, doing up parcels. Young authors, coming in to leave a precious manuscript and dreaming of encountering the famous author, would never suspect that they were actually in her presence as the drab figure in the gray overalls busied herself with scissors and string” (17). The Woolfs also did much of their own book traveling until 1938, without even hiring part-time
employees for this job during the Press’s first ten years. In each of these ways Woolf was intimately involved in the business of the Press.

Woolf, then, was uniquely positioned among modernist authors to negotiate the creative and commercial sides of the literary marketplace, what Laura Marcus terms Woolf’s “way of negotiating the terms of literary publicity, and a space somewhere between the private, the coterie, and the public sphere” (145). We might also consider such divisions in terms of the relationship between ideology and aesthetics, the modern form of which Terry Eagleton famously considers “an eminently contradictory phenomenon” (3). In Eagleton’s account, art becomes autonomous from the “cognitive, ethical, and political” spheres, “curiously enough, by being integrated into the capitalist mode of production. When art becomes a commodity, it is released from its traditional social functions within church, court and state into the anonymous freedom of the market place….It is ‘independent’ because it has been swallowed up by commodity production” (368; original emphasis). Thus the “real historical complexity” (9) of the relationship between cultural production and bourgeois ideology becomes for Eagleton the nexus for examining how aesthetic autonomy can both reinforce and subvert ideological limitations on a subjectivity freed from late capitalist systems.

In her various roles as a reviewer and journalist for popular periodicals, as a typesetter and publisher for a Bloomsbury coterie press, and as a traveler, editor, and co-owner of a firm that had become by the late 1920s “‘more or less ordinary publishers,’” in Leonard’s words (qtd. in Rosenbaum 7), Woolf negotiated the intersection of the ideological and the aesthetic at every turn. Consider a September 1925 letter to Sackville-West, in which Woolf defends her decision to contribute to Dorothy Todd’s British edition of Vogue: “And whats the objection to whoring after Todd? Better whore, I think, than honestly and timidly and coolly and respectfully copulate with the Times Lit. Sup.” (L 3: 200). As Woolf’s sexual metaphors suggest, there is little meaningful difference (especially for a modernist woman writer, generally blocked from the publishing industry’s economic power) between Vogue and Times Literary Supplement (TLS). In Eagleton’s terms, we see equal possibilities of ideological reinforcement and subversion from both periodicals; both are equally integrated within the capitalist means of production.7

Sackville-West was certainly an appropriate recipient for such a letter, given her own career shifts between such experimental works as Seducers in Ecuador (1924) and such openly commercial works as Pepita (1937). The cultural dynamics of the marketplace take center stage in a
1927 letter to Woolf, in which Sackville-West describes an anonymous Hogarth customer carrying *To the Lighthouse* along a London street:

She was an unknown woman,—up from the country, I should think,… and as the policeman held me up with his white glove I saw your name staring at me, Virginia Woolf, against the moving red buses, in Vanessa [Bell’s] paraph of lettering. Then as I stayed there…I got an intense dizzying vision of you…writing those words which that woman was carrying home to read. How had she got the book? Had she stalked in,… and said “I want *To the Lighthouse*”? or had she strayed idly up to the counter and said “I want a novel please, to read in the train,—a new novel,—anything’ll do”? Anyhow, there it was, one of the eight thousand, in the hands of the Public. (217–18)

Sackville-West’s contrast between the intensity of Woolf’s private creation and the indiscriminate desires of the “Public” expresses the modernist dilemma of establishing a popular audience for experimental literature. *To the Lighthouse* is both a novel and an art object here, with its “paraph of lettering” created by Woolf’s sister and post-Impressionist painter. Yet Sackville-West fears that it may become instead a disposable commodity, an accessory for modernized mass transport with no aesthetic value. In fact, Woolf’s career as writer and publisher is always crossing back and forth along such a private/public line, never settling into a stable divide but always oscillating between such ostensible distinctions.

Woolf herself often echoes Sackville-West’s sentiments, as in her well-known remark in the introduction to the Modern Library’s 1928 edition of *Mrs. Dalloway*: “once a book is printed and published it ceases to be the property of the author; he commits it to the care of other people…” (v). Similarly, she worried frequently about being labeled “one of our leading female novelists” (*D 2*: 107), and felt anxious (in a letter to Stephen Spender) that “in the Years I wanted to catch the general readers attention: perhaps I did this too much” (*L 6*: 123). Yet Woolf displays ample evidence in *Room, Three Guineas*, and throughout her fiction of her deep awareness that modernist women writers could only develop cultural authority through an active engagement with popular audiences. Even while Miss La Trobe, Woolf’s final figure of the woman artist, yearns to write a play “without an audience” and “scribble[s] in the margin of her manuscript: ‘I am the slave of my audience’” (*BA* 180, 211), she nevertheless hears the first words of her next
play while surrounded by villagers in a pub (BA 212), a point made even
more explicitly in the Pointz Hall typescript, in which Woolf describes
the playwright in the “breeding ground, among the very dull...tun-
neling and foraging her way to that culmination” (177). As Jennifer
Wicke observes, “the production of writing for the modern woman
writer is tied inextricably to the procedures of consumption” (129).8

Perhaps more than any other modernist, then, Woolf was deeply
aware of the interconnectedness of the aesthetic and commercial
realms. As she concludes in the draft version of Room, “You may accuse
me of laying too much stress on / Money...You can only have [intel-
lectual?] freedom / if you have money. & / And you can only write if
you have unbroken freedom” (Women 179). (In an interesting rhetorical
softening, “money” becomes “material things” in the published Room.)
Such a link between “money” and “freedom” is especially evident in a
November 1928 advertisement for Orlando, with a blurb from Arnold
Bennett, of all reviewers: “You cannot keep your end up at a London
dinner party in these weeks unless you have read Mrs. Virginia Woolf’s
Orlando” (Orlando). While Woolf the author famously uses Bennett as a
foil for her diagnosis of Edwardian fiction, Woolf the publisher capital-
izes on his praise to market the new “biography” by “Mrs. Woolf.”

Such marketing strategies also represent the dual feminist goals
advanced by Woolf in both her professional roles. While as an author
she could famously remark, “Call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, or
by any name you please,” as a publisher she was marketing “Virginia
Woolf” as a brand name, in an effort to avoid the business mistakes for
which she criticizes Jane Austen and others in Room. Only as author and
publisher, that is, could Woolf revise the aesthetic and commercial roles
available to modernist women writers.9

“This Almost Unknown Aunt”: A Room

of One’s Own and Empire

A Room of One’s Own, with its mix of fictionalized personae, histori-
cal research, and political polemic, perhaps most clearly illustrates the
aesthetic and ideological value of Woolf’s blurred genres. Woolf’s sharp
critique of patriarchy’s historical legacy “sold more rapidly than any-
thing else Woolf had written,” with print runs exceeding 12,000 cop-
ies between October and December 1929, not to mention a “startling
run” of 100,000 copies when Room first appeared in a Penguin edition
in 1945 (Briggs, Inner Life 235). By 1929 Woolf was a well-established
figure in the British literary marketplace, especially on the heels of *To the Lighthouse* and the very popular *Orlando*, and with Hogarth’s Uniform Series of her works launched that autumn. Beginning in December 1928, the Hogarth advertising logo became a wolf’s head (designed by E. McKnight Kauffer), a device which, Willis notes, showed that Leonard “had learned the value of advertising the producer as well as the product” (377). The wolf’s head device signals as well Virginia’s cultural and economic capital at this time, especially in Hogarth ads for her own works. Hogarth’s publishing practice for *Room* itself also reflected Woolf’s market position, as the press issued both a special £2.2 edition, limited to 100 copies and signed by the author, and a regular 5s edition. Such accessibility featured in a March 1930 ad trumpeting the book’s 12,000th copy in print, with a blurb from *The Listener*—“It is consoling, in a world of expensive shams and nostrums, to reflect that the book only costs 5s!”—that guarantees *Room’s* genuineness, interestingly, as a function of its inexpensiveness. By 1929, Hogarth had expanded significantly from its original husband-and-wife team to seven employees. In a diary entry from that year, Woolf reflects, “I think with pride that 7 people depend, largely, upon my hand writing on a sheet of paper. That is of course a great solace & pride to me. Its not scribbling; its keeping 7 people fed and housed.… [T]hey live on my words” (D 3: 221).

Given the importance of the Press to Woolf’s own career and to the “intellectual freedom” that *Room* celebrates, and given the economic power created by Woolf as a writer and publisher, enough for seven workers to “live on [her] words,” why then does *Room* keep the Press insistently in the shadows? And further, why does Woolf’s narrator substitute, at the point in her history when some version of the Press should appear, an accident of history, a legacy left by an aunt “for no other reason than that I share her name” (37)? As Christine Froula notes, this Indian inheritance “plainly implicates [Woolf’s] cherished freedom in racialized imperialist exploitation,” which seems “all the more puzzling when we remember that Woolf had helped Leonard research” *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (31), a treatise that identifies the European exploitation of Africa as an outgrowth of unceasing capitalist expansion, while calling ultimately for a European “social revolution” (361). Along these lines, we can see *Room* as engaged in a modernist self-critique through the figure of the narrator’s aunt, as part of what Elleke Boehmer calls modernism’s “intrinsic expression of an anxiously imperial world, surveying the breaking apart of trusted cultural certainties and the emergence of new, mixed and muddled identities”
Writing and publishing herself from a metropolitan perspective, Woolf brings colonialism “home” to European modernism through the aunt’s legacy, by her striking metaphorization of her own metropolitan and globalized profits.

Despite its coterie origins a decade earlier, the Hogarth Press was by 1929 an internationally recognized imprint. Indeed, by 1924 William Plomer knew enough of the Woolfs’ publications that he could declare them, as a twenty-one-year-old living in Zululand, “‘nearer the heart of things than any other publisher in London’” (qtd. in Willis 128).10 Hogarth did not sell directly to the colonies, along the lines of Macmillan’s Colonial Library series, but it did bring colonial fiction into the British market, as with Plomer’s Turbott Wolfe and, later, Laurens van der Post’s In a Province. Willis notes that by 1929 the Woolfs had made arrangements for distribution in Canada, and by 1936 had retained agents in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (392)—not to mention, of course, Woolf’s American publications through Harcourt Brace from 1921 on.11 While locally metropolitan in its origins, then, the Hogarth Press was international in its reach, part of what Sara Blair identifies as Bloomsbury’s ability to become “global in its resonances, a site of cultural contact and contestation where both canonical high modernisms and an emergent anticolonial modernism take shape” (814).

Such paradoxes in publishing practice are also reflected in Woolf’s narrative representations of the Empire, which shift from what Gayatri Spivak calls the “functionally witless India of Mrs. Dalloway” (131) to “Thunder and Wembley,” her essay on the 1924 Empire Exhibition that imagines a fantastic storm ridding the world of all vestiges of colonialism. Woolf’s metaphorical use of an Indian legacy in Room, then, functions as part of a larger pattern of a modernist English uneasiness with Empire, which is at the same time implicated very much within a metropolitan perspective.12 The Anglo-Indian aunt’s legacy in Room, which the narrator calls “the power of my purse to breed ten-shilling notes automatically” (37), seems on its surface to substitute colonial investment returns as a direct cause for the “intellectual freedom” made possible by £500 annually. This passage as a whole refers tellingly to Woolf’s earlier career, as the narrator explains that prior to her inheritance, “I had made my living by cadging odd jobs from the newspapers, by reporting a donkey show here or a wedding there; I had earned a few pounds by addressing envelopes, reading to old ladies, making artificial flowers, teaching the alphabet to small children in a kindergarten” (37). Obviously this sentence proceeds quickly into
farce, but Woolf’s journalistic income had in fact surpassed her profits from the Press in its early years. Woolf herself had earned £500 a year only beginning in 1926, and not until 1928 “did the larger part of her income come from her books” (Lee 549).

Woolf takes care to emphasize the geographical location of Mary Beton at her death in the published version of *Room*, revising the manuscript version’s reference to—“an Aunt who died from by a fall from her horse, when she was riding out to take the air in Bombay” (57)—to read in the published book, “My aunt, Mary Beton, I must tell you, died by a fall from her horse when she was riding out to take the air in Bombay” (37). The addition of the phrase “I must tell you” signals the published text’s emphasis on the particularly colonialist context of the *Room* narrator’s £500. The narrator insists on her seemingly self-perpetuating legacy as originating in a capitalist system predicated on the fantasy of “abstract labor,” which in turn is rendered doubly abstract by its location so far outside the exchange of ostensibly metropolitan commodities. From this perspective Woolf’s well-known claim that, thanks to the Hogarth Press, she was “the only woman in England free to write what I like” transfers that sentence’s usual emphasis on Woolf as a woman writer (and woman editor, woman publisher) to a woman in England.

The curious substitution of an Indian inheritance for the actual source of Woolf’s income recalls another surprising switch in Woolf’s narratives, the collapse of the *bildungsroman* structure in *The Voyage Out*. As Jed Esty has argued, *The Voyage Out*’s location in South America creates important links between “the colonial setting and the development of Woolf’s modernist style” (81), as a shift away from traditional novelistic representations of time and subject illustrate a “symbolic split…between the insular nation (a culture proper to the *bildungsroman*’s allegory of development) and the imperial state (a culture-diluting unit whose spatiotemporal coordinates did not conform to realist or national-historical time)” (75; original emphasis). In this vein we might see the metaphorization of Woolf’s Hogarth Press income as an Anglo-Indian legacy as performing a similar kind of symbolic substitution. Rather than figuring her economic independence as the result of teleological progress along the lines of a *bildungsroman*’s protagonist, Woolf’s narrator in *Room* emphasizes the arbitrary nature of her inherited income, which occurs “for no other reason than that I share her name” (AROO 37). That is, Mary Beton’s will effectively arrests a narrative of professional progress we would ordinarily ascribe to the speaker of a text like *Room*, locating the narrator’s current financial comfort not as
the fruits of her literary work but as an accident of family history, and in the horrors of colonial history. Woolf certainly did not see her own commercial success as accidental, even if she retained qualms about her popular audience throughout her career, but by figuring her narrator’s £500 in *Room* as accidently yet inescapably imperialist, she compels her readers to confront the colonialist presence at the heart of London’s metropolitan consciousness.

Jane Marcus famously reads this passage as insisting that Woolf’s room “has been bought with blood money. The English woman reader is reminded of her fall, the imperialist historical sin committed by her ancestress collecting butterflies in India or cataloging orchids in Africa, which funds the Edwardian freedom to write” (*Hearts* 42). But this passage also puts at stake the idea that the Hogarth Press itself constitutes a kind of “blood money,” as the principle of substitution would conflate the actual, submerged source of Woolf’s income with the fictionalized version she presents in *Room*. As Kathy Phillips observes, “Woolf herself has to acknowledge a kinship with that rider in Bombay” (xxxix), as evidenced by her use of “Mary Beton” among the string of pseudonyms she asks her readers to call her. In a passage that disappears from the published version of *Room*, though, Woolf simultaneously acknowledges and dissolves that kinship, exhorting her readers to free themselves to write new kinds of fiction by violently disowning their family histories. Woolf writes in the Fitzwilliam manuscript: “All this leads me to quite selfishly, to ask you {to murder an Aunt or two;} by hook or by crook to possess yourselves of yourselves, even if it comes to murdering an Aunt or two, of sufficient money to sit down look at the <explore> world for <a room of your own so that> with your own eyes & to say for yourselves; and to say without fear of furor what you think of it” (*Women* 168–69). Similarly, Woolf’s notes for the text’s conclusion read: “But more is needed. Aunts must be killed” (*Women* 179). This violent rhetoric disappears from the pages of the published *Room*, part of a broader tendency to produce a palimpsest between manuscript and print editions, so that, as Brenda Silver writes, “What was once perceived as the single, integral work—the published novel—becomes multiple, intertextual” (206).

In this case that palimpsest, the collection of “the words that are both there and not there on Woolf’s pages” (Silver 195), includes both the manuscript fantasy of murdering aunts as well as the submerged reference to Woolf’s Press income which that metaphor, and its deleted print version, replace. The ultimate effect of this doubled absence, I would argue, is to create a kind of Möbius strip connecting the Hogarth Press
and British imperialism, so that, read through the fluid text of *A Room of One’s Own* and *Women & Fiction*, the two terms are inseparable. As Silver concludes, “Once we are aware of the manuscript versions and their alternate readings, it becomes impossible, except by a willed act of commitment to a particular interpretative stance, not to be conscious of their presence within the ‘final’ text” (194). Given the brand-name recognition she had developed for herself through the Hogarth Press, enough by 1929 to advertise *Room* with the Press’s wolf’s-head logo, Woolf could certainly have expected her readers to recognize the absence of the Press in her fictionalized explanation of her £500. By doubly distancing herself from the Hogarth Press in *Room*, first by metaphorical substitution and then by canceled metaphorical murder, Woolf the self-published author retains the Press as an absent referent of the “blood money” on which women’s intellectual freedom depends, at the same time that she signed 100 copies of the book’s limited edition for sale at several times the regular price. Thus Woolf’s representation of the literary market in *Room*, and of the global, colonialist market of which the metropolitan London book readership was inevitably a part, finally portrays Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and India all as part of a complex, inextricable system.

**Notes**

1. The obvious exception to this statement is the posthumous decision made by Leonard Woolf and John Lehmann to publish Woolf’s unfinished manuscript *Pointz Hall* as *Between the Acts*. See Briggs, *Inner Life* 390–94; and Mark Hussey’s introduction to his forthcoming Cambridge edition.

2. For an especially illuminating examination of the ways in which Woolf’s work on the hand-press could inform her own approaches to modernist textuality, see Briggs’s chapter on Hope Mirrlees’s *Paris*, published by Hogarth in 1920 (*Reading* 80–95).

3. *The Edwardians* became the “all-time Hogarth Press best-seller” (Willis 266). While not in the same category, *Death of My Aunt*, Willis notes, “made money and made Kitchin’s reputation” (159). *The Years* was by far Woolf’s bestseller during her lifetime, ranking sixth on the American list for 1937, behind Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* but ahead of John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* (Willis 290).

4. The burden of reviewing unsolicited novels is the source of Woolf’s most frequent complaints about the Press (L 4: 23), and her (and Leonard’s) periodic considerations about closing the firm.

5. The idea of authorship as an inherently social process, which entails viewing the author as always working with editors, printers, publishers, readers, etc., in the process of textual production, originates in the work of McGann and McKenzie.

6. While Virginia “must have written some letters” to prospective authors, Willis notes, “none of them seem to have survived” (370).

7. For much more extensive examinations of Woolf’s contributions to *Vogue*, see Garrity.
8. See also Whitworth on this point, though I would argue that the control of textual production is even more crucial than he recognizes.

9. I have adapted some of the material in the conclusion of this section from my “Virginia Woolf’s Publishing Archive.”


11. The Hogarth files at Reading also include a letter from Leonard to Plomer, offering him a position as Hogarth’s traveler while he lived in Japan in the mid-1920s, an offer he declined. I am grateful to Random House Group, Ltd., for permission to use these letters, and to the Special Collections staff at the University of Reading Library for their assistance in reviewing archival material related to the Hogarth Press.

12. For more extensive connections between Woolf and colonialism, see especially Boehmer, Esty, McVicker, and Phillips.

13. As Kathy J. Phillips notes, Woolf had herself inherited £2,500 in 1909, from an aunt whose father was Sir James Stephen, an abolitionist who served as Under Secretary for the Colonies (xxxviii–xxxix). See also Marcus, Hearts 82–85.

14. For another rejoinder to Marcus’s argument, see Froula 30–32.

15. In this transcription, words enclosed in carats (as in <explore>) are insertions, words crossed through are cancellations, and words enclosed in brackets (as in {to murder}) are bracketed by Woolf.

16. On the idea of a fluid text, see Bryant.

---

**Works Cited**


PART IV

Marketing Woolf
Even though Fascism was a harsh and patriarchal dictatorship notorious for its strong nationalism, raised barriers and censored press, there were forums in Fascist Italy where Italian and foreign literatures could be published, read, and discussed. The primary venues were literary and cultural publications; indeed, they played such an important role in Italian culture that the twentieth century is known as “the century of periodicals.” The advent of the golden age of journals marked “not only the birth of a new ‘instrument’ of communication, but even more, the foundation of a new ‘space’ for culture. Periodicals became the most effective way . . . to produce and distribute culture”1 (Langella 4). It was thanks to these publications that, even under patriarchal Fascism, a feminist writer like Virginia Woolf was not censored but was rather welcomed as “too grand a lady of literature to have any of her works mistreated” (Scalero 512). To convey the important role Woolf played as a grand lady of literature in the Italian marketplace, I will describe her presence in Italian periodicals, analyze her reception by Italian literary critics in the Fascist era, and explain how her novels were introduced to the Italian reading public.

On 31 December 1929 Woolf granted Fratelli Treves2 the rights to the Italian translation of To the Lighthouse. That was Woolf’s first contract with an Italian publisher; none of her works had been translated into Italian before then. Fratelli Treves was to publish To the Lighthouse by 31 March 1931, but something went awry and three more
years passed before the novel was translated into Italian, by Giulia Celenza. This delay in the publication was significant because, in the meantime, Arnoldo Mondadori had bought the rights for Orlando and Flush. Mondadori published them respectively in 1933 and 1934, and Alessandra Scalero translated both (see Villa’s essay in this volume). Italian readers therefore read Orlando before any other of Woolf’s novels. In 1934 they saw Flush and To the Lighthouse appear on the market, each of which made a significant impact on the public. To the Lighthouse was a critical success, and Flush, translated and published only one year after its publication in the United Kingdom, was both a critical and a commercial success. Mondadori printed 4,025 copies of the book, which were soon sold out, and the novel was described by the critics as “the best book by the best European writer” (Notizie [“News”]). Woolf was therefore introduced to the Italian public through her two most playful books, both of which she considered a joke as did Leonard, who wrote that they “cannot seriously be compared with her major novels” (145).

Mondadori’s choice to translate Orlando and Flush before any of her other novels is worth a digression. Excerpts from two translations from Mrs. Dalloway had, in fact, already appeared in literary periodicals, and critics had described the novel as “her most perfect work” (Consiglio 162). Critics said Orlando, on the other hand, was disappointing; they believed it lacked the balance of Woolf’s previous novels. Why, then, choose to publish Orlando first instead of Mrs. Dalloway?

Mary Ann Caws suggests that “Woolf’s more modernist works, such as Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, and The Waves are slower to be accepted into the European canon” (xix–xx). But Mondadori’s choice might also have been partially influenced by the challenging themes present in Mrs. Dalloway: the homosexual references were too explicit for the reading public under Fascism. In fact, even in the first Italian translation, which appeared in 1946, when Italy was no longer under a dictatorship but homosexual behaviors were still strongly censored, the homosexual references in Mrs. Dalloway were slightly transformed so that, for instance, the Italian public had to wait for the 1992 translation by Pier Francesco Paolini to discover that “the most exquisite moment” of Clarissa’s life had been when Sally had kissed her, and not the flower she had picked from a stone urn. One might argue that homosexuality is more frequently suggested in Orlando than in Mrs. Dalloway, so much so that Orlando is now one of the milestones of gay culture all over the world. And yet in Orlando there are no kisses and caresses—nothing more explicit than a provocative treatment of androgyny and gender
The “Grand Lady of Literature”

identity, with gender rendered so ephemeral that it can change at any moment without resulting in significant alteration (O 98).

Italian critics, however, were not influenced by Mondadori’s editorial choices, for they had formed their opinions before the publication of Orlando in Italian. In fact, it was they who first introduced Woolf to Italian readers. Between 1927 and 1933 at least twelve articles, including reviews and translations, had already appeared in Italian literary periodicals. By 1933 Woolf was described as “a writer par excellence” (Linati, A Room 175) and her work was judged “among the most perfect of today” (Morra, Il nuovo 35). Even under Fascism, then, Woolf was esteemed as a great novelist and an eminent critic starting with her first appearance in Italian literary periodicals. In their analyses of Woolf’s works Italian critics understood, from the beginning, the innovation of her style and prose.

It was the great Italian critic Carlo Linati who first presented Woolf to the Italian reading public. Linati was well known not only as a friend and translator of Joyce, but he had already introduced D. H. Lawrence to Italian readers. His article on Woolf in a cultural supplement of the Corriere della Sera in 1927 created a stir, inspiring other critics to read and review her works. Linati’s intention was to introduce Woolf to the Italian public and to that end, a few months after this article appeared, he presented three excerpts, translated into Italian by himself, from Mrs. Dalloway. They were published in La Fiera Letteraria, a periodical addressed to middle class readers, and whose “main aim,” as stated in its first issue, “was to publish a periodical read by the largest audience possible, for no communication—even spiritual—is possible except through the consent of the people” (“Esistere nel tempo” [“Existing in time”]). Linati was therefore not only the first in Italy to introduce the writer, but also the first to offer an Italian translation illustrating the uniqueness of Woolf’s prose, even if his translation itself was rather odd and sometimes misleading.

Linati was most impressed by Woolf’s writing style; he described it as “a delicate, original and effective means of expression.” Given the importance that Woolf herself accorded her prose and the fact that she was read in English by Italian critics, who might have been expected to find her particularly difficult to understand, Linati’s attention to her style is significant. Her originality was clear to other Italian critics, who quickly understood how Woolf’s prose differed from what they were accustomed to. Although Alessandra Scalero (translator of Orlando, Flush and Mrs. Dalloway) could not possibly have read the diaries, where Woolf famously noted, “I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my book to supplant ‘novel’” (WD 78), she
wrote that *The Waves* could not, “strictly speaking, be called a novel” (Scalero 512). As if the adjectives specific to narrative prose were insufficient to describe Woolf’s new and complicated writing, Italian critics resorted to expressions from other arts such as painting, music, and poetry.

For example, in his 1927 article Linati remarked on the “chiaroscuro,” or the “colors” of Woolf’s style as if he, like Scalero, had read Woolf’s diary, where she refers more than once to her writing as if it was painting. In this same article Linati asks if Woolf is an “impressionist,” as she had been called in British periodicals, and he answers that there is, in fact, a picturesque style in her writing, but that this style does not deprive her writing of life or vitality. Linati mostly resorted to language more suited to music, as we can see in his frequent use of words such as “flexibility,” “modulation,” “richness of tones,” and “delicate and intimate music” (Corriere della Sera; Emporium 21). Linati was not alone here. Other critics also indicated their appreciation of the sound of her voice and the music of her prose. Umberto Morra described *Mrs. Dalloway* as a novel “entirely dedicated to the regularity of rhythm” (“Il nuovo romanzo inglese” 44 [“The New English Novel”]), while Guglielmo Serafini called it an “immense symphony of the great city” (13) using a term which was to recur more than once, above all for novels such as *The Waves* or *To the Lighthouse*. In his first article in *Il Baretti*, Morra also compared *Time Passes* to the “adagio of a symphony” (27).

Finally, Woolf’s style also led the critics to associate her writing with poetry. In an article published in *La Nuova Antologia* in 1933, Salvatore Rosati said that her prose was characterized by “rhythms, assonances, rhymes and alliterations,” all devices more typical of poetry than of prose. While her first novels were “closer to narrative,” Rosati wrote, *To the Lighthouse* is remarkable for its “intense lyricism” and “poetry,” and he concludes that “those who attempt to write as seriously and courageously as Virginia Woolf inevitably find themselves on the path to poetry” (637).

In contrast to Arnold Bennett’s criticism of Woolf’s characters—they “do not vitally survive in the mind because the author has been obsessed by details of originality and cleverness”—Italian critics immediately recognized her ability to create character. The presumed absence of the real world was not a point of contention for them. Unlike Arnold, Italian critics understood how Woolf was building her characters from within, describing their inward states and not the outward aspects. Rosati was, once again, in the forefront here, explaining how Woolf
had been working on this process of inward investigation since her first works, and improving on it novel after novel. He wrote that *Jacob’s Room, Mrs. Dalloway, and To the Lighthouse*

are three moments of a trend toward a more intense interiority. Anything which can be considered a framework is eschewed: just as there is no plot, there is no exterior form of characterization. The psychology of the characters is developed through a sequence and consideration of mental acts, feelings and emotions. Woolf’s characters essentially consist of a continuous passage of these sequences through a stream of consciousness…. She does not aim at reproducing life but at creating life. (638)

Here Rosati shows how well he realized what Woolf called her “great discovery”: her ability to “dig out beautiful caves” behind her characters (*WD* 59). Because of this faculty, her writing was often associated with psychologism in Europe and her work was linked to those by Joyce and Proust who were already popular when Woolf appeared on the literary scene. As Nicola Luckhurst writes, “often the trinity of Joyce, Proust and Woolf is rearranged in a pecking order that is invariably to Woolf’s disadvantage, whether she is perceived to be slighter, more genteel and less experimental than Joyce, or simply as writing in the wake of Proust” (3). Pierre-Éric Villeneuve notes that French critics still consider Joyce as “the guiding light of literary life across the Channel” (19), and that has been true since 1929, when Louis Gillet wrote in the *Revue des deux mondes*, “It is easy to see that Mrs. Virginia Woolf’s books, *Jacob’s Room, Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse* bear the imprint of Mr. James Joyce’s genius. Whatever one thinks of *Ulysses*, this strange book remains a literary landmark…. Mrs. Virginia Woolf would never have written this small masterpiece of the *Lighthouse* had *Ulysses* not been constantly in her thoughts” (220).

In Italy critics also found similarities between Woolf, and Joyce and Proust, but instead of being to Woolf’s disadvantage these resemblances were mostly mentioned to show how her style was more precise and innovative, and how the method of her novels surpassed that of her more popular fellow novelists. Linati, for instance, in writing about *Mrs. Dalloway* in *Corriere della Sera*, states that “it is perhaps Joyce’s technique that she uses in her introspective visions and interior monologue, but with so much more purity and measure.” Alberto Consiglio praises Woolf for having achieved a “perfect equilibrium” between
“Proust’s psychologism and Joyce’s *Ulysses* desperate experiments” (161). Consiglio adds that

Woolf’s experiment is particularly superb because, even as she has revealed plot alone as an inferior mode of signification, she also redefines it as more intimate and deeply steeped in passion, reaching a nobility and humanity, not as highly and morbidly dramatic as Proust, but, undoubtedly, sufficiently balanced and intense that she has created what we might call a psychoanalytical tradition. (162)

It was once again Salvatore Rosati who went a step further, denying, in 1933, this derivation from Joyce, Proust, or Bergson, and saying that all these similarities existed but were fortuitous, “based on spiritual and intellectual trends which are the distinctive mark of our time and that can, therefore, be easily found in any artist who today occupies such an eminent position” (637). Rosati earned the merit of having understood Woolf’s oeuvre on its own terms and, in fact, after 1933, no critic ever compared Woolf with Joyce or Proust again but considered her in terms of her own standards and accomplishments.

From 1938 to 1945, the years of World War II, Italian critics paid no attention to Woolf in literary periodicals, even though in those years she published *Three Guineas, Roger Fry*, and *Between the Acts*. There is no trace of those works before the end of World War II and, as Sergio Perosa points out, after 1945 there was a change in the attitude of the literary critics:

Mixed feelings about her acceptance and her value characterize the period after the Second World War. . . . The prevailing and “correct” attitude was then all in favor of neo–realism, socially committed fiction, and political engagement, and in that cultural climate Virginia Woolf’s reputation and “relevance” were doomed to suffer. (207)

However, it was when the critics started to sound less enthusiastic about Woolf that her Italian editorial adventure began—or one should say Leonard’s Italian editorial adventure, as it is he who maintained all the contacts with the editors and who followed through with the editing of Virginia’s works in Italian. The war was not yet over when Leonard, on 9 February 1945, wrote to Arnoldo Mondadori a letter assigning him the Italian translation rights of all his wife’s works with the exception of *To the Lighthouse*, which had already been published by Fratelli Treves in 1934. Mondadori was puzzled about the rights of *To the Lighthouse*
having been assigned to Treves and under the above mentioned letter he typed a note for his secretarial staff:

in regard to *To the Lighthouse* I definitely don’t remember having seen an Italian translation of it, which should have been published a long time ago if L. WOOLF speaks of Treves and not of Garzanti. Try and check in the Pagliaini—the title should be IL FARO—and, if you do not find it, I would say to L. WOOLF that the work never appeared in Italy and that, if he wishes, he can insert it in the contract asking the HELICON to check if, by any chance, the terms have not expired.

Remind him in the contract that the first book will not be published before 12 or 18 months after the end of hostilities.

If you want to mention the first volumes we plan to publish, here are the titles:

JACOB’S ROOM
BETWEEN THE ACTS
MRS. DALLOWAY
ROGER FRY

As Mondadori indicated in this memo, he did not know about the 1934 publication of *To the Lighthouse*. This does seem strange because the novel had been published by Treves with an introduction by Emilio Cecchi, who was a close friend of his, and the book had been reviewed in several periodicals. The fact that Mondadori did not know about its Italian translation led him to suggest a possible translation for *To the Lighthouse*: Il Faro (literally, “*The Lighthouse*”). That would not have been a precise translation, but it would have been better than *Gita al faro* (literally, “*A Trip to the Lighthouse*”), the title chosen by Treves. *Gita al faro* was doomed to remain the dominant Italian title of the novel until nearly the end of the twentieth century. Finally, in 1992, it was re-translated into Italian by Nadia Fusini for Feltrinelli with the more accurate title *Al Faro* (literally, “*To the Lighthouse*”), which finally contains that al, corresponding to the English to, indicating both an apostrophe and a preposition of movement. So, for almost sixty years and sometimes even today, Italians have known one of Woolf’s most famous novels with a misleading title. Perhaps if the editors had read the article Morra had published in *Il Baretti* in 1928, this would not have happened. In his article Morra focuses on the importance of Woolf’s titles; with them, he writes, “we are at the entrance of her world; she starts speaking from the frontispiece of her book. Let’s pay attention to the
beginning of her discourse” (27). He also suggests possible translations, such as Il Viaggio (“The Voyage”) for The Voyage Out, which unfortunately was translated as La Crociera (“The Cruise”), and speaking about To the Lighthouse he writes, “it is true that To the Lighthouse is a trip to the lighthouse, but listen to the sound of the title. It is much more evasive. No one, on reading the title, would imagine the story of an excursion” (27).

In the above memo Mondadori revealed the order in which he planned to publish the translations: Jacob’s Room, Between the Acts, Mrs. Dalloway and Roger Fry. Mondadori’s initial intention is curious, as he planned to start with Woolf’s first experimental novel but then, instead of following a chronological order, he passed to Between the Acts, a posthumous work, to then go back to Mrs. Dalloway which, considering the existing reviews, should have been the first on the list. As it turned out, because of problems with translators Mondadori did start with La Signora Dalloway. It was the first novel of the collection Il Ponte (“The Bridge”) which Mondadori, in a letter to Leonard Woolf, describes as including “the most important works by foreign and Italian writers” and which, on the dust jacket, states its aim of “collecting the major works by leading Italian and foreign contemporary narrators.” Unfortunately, however, although the two Mondadoris—Arnoldo and Alberto, father and son—were convinced, as they wrote to Emilio Cecchi, that it would have been “worth publishing all her works,” and although they struggled unsuccessfully for years to publish all of them, they finally had to give up the idea, and succeeded in producing only a part of her oeuvre. 8 They could claim to have been the first to really understand the value of her work. In addition, they had had the farsightedness to buy the translation rights even before the end of World War II, despite all the bureaucratic difficulties involved in making a commercial agreement with an enemy country.

It was thanks to Arnoldo Mondadori that, as soon as the Fascist era came to an end, Woolf’s adventure on the Italian market could begin. Given Woolf’s disdain for the critical literary establishment in her own country, it is interesting to consider whether or not she might have modulated her views if she had known the important role played by literary critics in introducing her to the Italian readership. It is especially thanks to what the Italian critics had already done for Virginia Woolf in literary periodicals during the difficult years of Fascism that her works could find an Italian literary marketplace prepared to welcome and ready to understand her.
The “Grand Lady of Literature”

Notes

1. All translations from the Italian are mine.
2. The publishing house which was to become Garzanti, still one of the greatest publishing houses in Italy.
3. “Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips” (MD 40; emphasis added) became, in Italian, “Venne, allora, il momento più delizioso di tutta la sua vita; quando passarono davanti a un’urna di pietra piena di fiori. Sally si fermò, spiccò un fiore, lo portò alle labbra e lo baciò (‘kissed it’)” (57). Even if in Italy two more accurate translations of Mrs. Dalloway are now available, it is still possible to buy a copy published by Mondadori with the first translation of Alessandra Scalero, where Sally still kisses the flower instead of Clarissa.
4. Linati is the critic to whom we owe the Linati schema of Joyce’s Ulysses. This preparatory schema was produced by Joyce in 1920 to help Linati to better understand the fundamental structure of the book and is still a useful tool for the critics.
5. As an example I quote the following from Mrs. Dalloway: “But this question of love (she thought, putting her coat away), this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love?” (230) Linati translated this passage as follows: “Ma questa questione dell’amore (pensava Dalloway togliendosi l’abito) questo innamorarsi di una donna. Prendi Sally Seaton, per esempio, la mia relazione con Sally Seaton. Dopotutto non era quello amore?” The idea of falling in love “with women” is lost in Italian, replaced by the idea of falling in love with one woman, although Woolf’s reference to love among women is something more complicated and intimate than a simple love for “one woman.” But what’s worse is that Linati continues his translation referring to “Dalloway,” and not to “Clarissa” nor to “Mrs. Dalloway.” In Italian, the stand-alone surname is mainly used to refer to men, not to women, so from this translation we are to understand that Mr. Dalloway thinks about his love for a woman while putting away his “suit” (not his coat, as in the original). Linati than switches to the first person mentioning “la mia relazione,” “my relation” with Sally Seton, instead of “her,” that is Clarissa’s, relation with Sally Seton. Linati probably did so to introduce Woolf to Italian readers by avoiding inconvenient references to homosexuality, which would have probably been censored in Italy at the time.
7. That is, “flessibilità,” “modulazione,” “ricchezza di toni,” “musica delicata e intima.”
8. Mondadori recently succeeded in its project thanks to the publication, in the renowned collection “Meridiani,” of two volumes containing a collection of the most important works by Woolf (one for the Novels and one for Essays and Short Stories), both edited and with an introduction by Nadia Fusini.

Works Cited


The first full translation of *Orlando* in Italian was published on 1 October 1933 by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore in the prestigious Medusa collection, a series aimed at presenting “the great novelists of every country”\(^1\) to the Italian public. This claim was announced on each of its covers, including *Orlando*’s. What made the Italian translation of *Orlando* such a literary and economic success was not only the brilliance of the novel along with the editorial ambitions of Mondadori but also, as I shall show, the lexical expertise of its translator, Alessandra Scalero. In her translation Scalero was able to remain true to the spirit and the style of a subversive novel and what is more remarkable, she accomplished this feat in a climate of repressive censorship.

The choice of this fantastical novel for the first complete Italian edition was due to several factors, starting with Mondadori’s decision to undertake an unprecedented expansion. During the 1920s Mondadori inaugurated new major literary collections including *Le Grazie* (“*The Graces*”),\(^2\) *I Romanzi d’oggi* (“*Novels of Today*”), and *La Biblioteca Romantica* (“*The Romantic Library*”). In terms of international literary production, in 1929 Mondadori created the bestselling Noir series *I Gialli Mondadori* (“*Noir Books by Mondadori*”), starting with the publication of *The Benson Murder Case* by Dick Van Dyne. *I Gialli Mondadori*, which published a high percentage of foreign noir writers of the time, was followed by
the series *Le Scie* ("The Trails"), dedicated to matters of contemporary history that counterbalanced Mondadori’s translations of foreign novelists with its focus on current Italian issues and a more independent approach to subjects of national relevance (Decleva 1993).

In 1933 Mondadori focused on two new literary collections. The first was an economic version of the 1929 Noirs, *I Gialli Economici Mondadori* ("The Economic Noirs by Mondadori"), sold through the same distribution of the national newspapers in order to attract the larger public. Secondly, in order to appeal to more cultured readers and to further open the Italian market to prestigious translations of selected international authors, Mondadori launched the Medusa collection ("Il Cumenda"; Raboni). Medusa’s first publication was Alain Fournier’s *Le meilleur ami* ("The Best Friend"). Like *Le meilleur ami*, *Orlando* fit the needs of the Medusa collection. Besides being an acclaimed and unconventional work, *Orlando* had already proven to be a success both in England and in France. Woolf herself had been surprised by the British public’s response to *Orlando*, which had sold 8104 copies within the first six months of its publication in 1928 (Bell 2: 140); why then shouldn’t Mondadori expect a similar reaction from the Italian readers? The novel demonstrated both literary quality and market success.

In addition, Italian literati had already published articles on Woolf in the major literary magazines of the time. Articles by Carlo Linati in *Corriere della Sera* (1927) and *Leonardo* (1930); Sibilla Aleramo in *L’Italia Letteraria* (1931); Umberto Morra in *Il Baretti* (1928), *Solaria* (1929), *La Cultura* (1931), and *Pegaso* (1932); and Alessandra Scalero, the Italian translator of *Orlando*, in *Leonardo* (1932) (Bolchi 2007) introduced Woolf as an innovative writer. Even when these critics, including Umberto Morra, had manifested some reservations about *Orlando* (Morra 55), they also expressed an appreciation of Woolf's style; for example Morra praises her for the “multicolor flourishing of her ideas, realized with genial mastership” (55).

These early critical essays created a sense of anticipation for a novel that was, up to that point, unusual even for Woolf herself. At first *Orlando* disoriented the major Italian critics, but they quickly formed a favorable impression of it and of Woolf herself, whom they lauded as a new, major English writer. Certainly, the atmosphere created by these critics paved the way for the positive response the book received from Italian readers. Within a few months all 4,002 copies of *Orlando* published by Mondadori were sold and following *Orlando*, the translation of *Flush*, was, once again, loved by the public: its two editions, the first published in October 1934 with 4,025 copies, and the second
in December 1938 with 1,988 copies, were both sold out (“Internal Mondadori Document”).

With Orlando, Mondadori was opening the Italian editorial market to a literary work which defied novelistic conventions and to a novelist who had already been claimed by some of the major Italian critics as “a religious soul in an everlasting relationship with the music of the Earth, a serious lover of the mysterious rhythm arising from the Firmament” (Aleramo 9). However, the effect of the Orlando’s publication proved to be more significant than the introduction of a new writer to the Italian literary scene. Orlando’s marketing success, preceded by the Italian critics’ marketing of Woolf, convinced even reactionary readers to appreciate a groundbreaking writer and to be less censorious of the increasing number of literary translations from English that Mondadori was about to publish in its Medusa collection.5

Italy’s authoritarian government also played an important role in Mondadori’s decision to publish Orlando. In 1933 the Ministry of Press and Propaganda was attempting to foster “Fascist thought and ethics” (Fabre 251) through the means of censorship, or a “Fascistization” of the Italian editorial production. The Ministry of Press and Propaganda did not spare literary productions. For instance, in September 1933, just one month before the appearance of Orlando in its Italian edition, the censorship office officially sequestered Mondadori’s Storia di una notte (“History of One Night”) by Joe Lederer. A letter dated 6 October 1933, written to Arnoldo Mondadori by Galeazzo Ciano, who was Head of the Press Office of the Head of State (i.e., Mussolini), stated that the suicide in Lederer’s novel should be excised so that the novel could remain among Mondadori’s titles (Ciano). The elements most despised by the Censorship Office6 in the 1930s were any forms of negativity addressed to the Italian people, especially criticism of current and past governments, explicit sexual references, and detailed crime scenes (Cannistraro 113–24). However, in 1933 the parameters of the Fascist censorship had not yet reached the levels of 1940 when Woolf, because of her Jewish husband, together with John Dos Passos, Thomas Mann, and John Steinbeck, among others, had been quoted in the official list of authors disapproved of by the regime authorities (Fabre 360–74; Rundle). In 1940 Orlando, along with all the literary translations published between the World Wars, was withdrawn from the market (Fabre 361).

Even in the less repressive atmosphere of the early 1930s, the sexual metamorphosis of the novel’s main character and the androgynous nature of his/her personality might have potentially caused some
censorship issues for Mondadori, though it was used to having its Noir and Medusa series scanned for unacceptable passages, themes, and even allusions. The sexually double nature of Orlando, in particular, could have been interpreted as the literary negation of the ideal of muscular and patriarchal masculinity promoted by the Fascist ideology, especially by Mussolini himself. Renowned for the “hard, statuary postures” of his body language (Gori 52), the head of state was an image of Italian virility in Fascist iconography. Though Orlando in his male incarnation was far from affirming Mussolini’s ideal—the official fashion of the time alone almost disguised Orlando’s masculinity when he was a man—his male conduct, starting with the childhood game of hitting the head of a Moor (O 1933: 11) and ending with the highest ranks of the diplomatic career, might have made him look like the perfect embodiment of a Fascist man, devoting his life and male identity to the needs of his country. The same acceptance would not have been accorded to Orlando when he became a woman who, from time to time, disguised herself as a young Lord.

However, the androgynous nature of Orlando could have been more dangerously read as subverting the heterosexual divide if the censors had attended to the disquisitions of the biographer on the power of the clothes “to mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their lining” (O 1993: 132) and to the ways in which this sexual disguise was exploited, for instance, in the encounter between Orlando in her incarnation as a woman and the prostitute Nellie. Orlando meets Nellie when she is disguised as a man, and we see Orlando reveal her sexual identity just before any physical seduction occurs. After Orlando’s unmasking, the two women spend the rest of the night in a companionable conversation over a fire and a bowl of punch, with Nellie telling Orlando the story of her life (O 1933: 151). Lesbian tension is undoubtedly present in the scene describing the initial advances, but it is also exorcised (though not wholly) by the subsequent lack of reference to any physical contact suggestive of homosexual desire. Finally, the novel ends with the most traditional feminine goal possible: the main character marries a nobleman and becomes a mother, thus affirming the heteronormative familial model. The Italian censors of the time would have certainly appreciated this ending, considering the regime’s promulgating the civic function of motherhood. In the period between the wars, when Italy, along with the rest of Europe, was facing a serious demographic crisis, having children was considered a social duty. The government granted tax exemptions to families in an effort to promote population—and in turn economic—growth (Regio).
Yet, if we consider the more general context of the entire novel, how could the Italian censors tolerate the same figure embodying both the impeccable nobleman and the accomplished mother? How could the sexual metamorphosis from male to female be accepted without the slightest abridgement? The lack of anatomic details was crucial for allowing Orlando’s transformation scene to remain untouched in its Italian translation. However, not the least important for the survival of this scene from the hands of Fascist censorship is the fantastic, fairylike, almost supernatural atmosphere surrounding it, an atmosphere which furthermore characterizes the entire novel.

One can see how the classical mask additionally suffuses the scene of sexual metamorphosis with a mythical aura and hides what is underneath from the eye of the censor. These expectations of a fairylike metamorphosis had been nurtured by the critics who had written about Orlando before its publication in Italian. Sibilla Aleramo, for instance, had defined “the ‘long and immense tunnel’ which is Orlando’s life” as “magically persuasive” and described his sexual metamorphosis as a “sleight of hand” (9), and welcomed the fictional biography as an ideal example, among its multiplicity of forms, of narrative fantasy and literary reverie. Moreover, the first excerpt from Orlando that was introduced in Italian to the Italian public was the fantastic account of the Great Frost (Woolf, “Il gran gelo” 55), which resembled, in its implausible silence, a malign force spreading directly from hell, rather than a true historical moment of unexpected glaciation. Even if the rest of the passage describes the serendipitous encounter between Orlando and Sasha, the title chosen for the excerpt—“Il grande gelo” (“The Great Frost”; O 1993: 24–29)—confirmed, once again, the desire of Italian critics to focus on the originality and narrative construction of the fairy atmosphere imbuing the novel.

However, as readers know, the magical element is also intertwined with characters alternately realistic and improbable; these counterpoints of reality might have indicated the existence of actual subversive subtexts even in the most fantastic scenes. Orlando’s sex change might have then been interpreted as undermining the ideological basis of the dichotomous gender system. Alessandra Scalero, the translator chosen for this first edition of Orlando, seems more than conscious of this possibility. In her introduction to the novel she argues that “Orlando is also a typical portrait of the woman artist, who has in herself all the features of both male and female genders,… and is almost a woman who has assimilated male instincts” and then cautiously adds, “but this is a dangerous statement and a controversial subject which would take me
too far from the modest scope that I intended to realize [in this preface]” (10–11). In addition, Scalero carefully precedes this risky—and Woolfian—interpretation with a more traditional reading of Orlando as a personification of poetry which must, by its own nature, express the most intimate feelings of both sexes.

As we can see here, Scalero is cautious in her introduction: she broaches the controversial and certainly ticklish gender issue only to safely censor herself. She also quotes the interpretation offered by the French translator Charles Mauron who, in his preface, reads Orlando as a personification of poetry which must, by its own nature, express the most intimate feelings of both sexes.

As we can see here, Scalero is cautious in her introduction: she broaches the controversial and certainly ticklish gender issue only to safely censor herself. She also quotes the interpretation offered by the French translator Charles Mauron who, in his preface, reads Orlando as an allegorical fantasy and Orlando’s character as reflective of a range of meanings, including “the persistence of a face and spirit through time, or the English aristocracy, or English poetry”; or “modern sexual uncertainty”; or simply “a walk by Mrs Woolf through the centuries” (xiii; my translation). The most explicit reference to the sexually subversive context is embedded in a list of possible interpretations, and is included in a citation made by a critic from another country. Scalero shields her daring interpretation from criticism. Her careful choice of quotations and her immediate pause in a discussion of the androgynous nature of the artistic mind, reminiscent of A Room of One’s Own (AROO 99), do manage to alert the reader to Orlando’s gender subtext without risking the intervention of the Fascistic censorship.

The shrewd subtlety showed by Scalero in her introduction reveals the experience she had acquired by the time she started translating Orlando. From the late 1920s to the early 1940s, Scalero worked extensively as a literary translator from English, German, and French for the publishing houses Mondadori and Il Corbaccio. As she was translating novels by Lawrence, Dos Passos, Daphne Du Maurier, Alfred Döblin, Jakob Wassermann, and Woolf, Scalero was conscious of the forms of inspection, editing, and vetoing perpetrated by the Fascist censorship. In 1929, in a letter sent from Berlin to her mother after the initial negotiations she had made for the Italian translations of Thomas Mann, she wrote, “I already imagine the turmoil of the Italian editorial world; they will all say that we are crazy!” (Letter). Here we can see how Scalero anticipated Fascistic criticism against Mann and his work; as a result of the 1938–1939 Fascist racial laws, in 1940 Thomas Mann was listed as an author officially despised by the country’s government. Scalero was clearly sensitive to the limitations imposed by the Fascist regime on the translations of foreign literary texts.

At the same time, Scalero was aware of the opportunity to allude to the most innovative though controversial aspects of a literary work. An experienced Italian translator like Scalero could convey the originality
of a writer like Woolf both through her translation and, if given the chance, in her introductory preface. In her translator's remarks on Orlando, we can see how she conducted herself with adroitness and wit, and when she could not explicitly identify critical subtexts, she opted for a series of ellipses, a form of punctuation allowing readers to complete the sentence with their own thoughts. We see Scalero employ this strategy twice in her preface. In the first instance she points to the similarity between Vita Sackville-West and the features of one of her male ancestors as they appear in one of portraits included the novel. Scalero upsets the expectations of readers who assume that Vita is represented in one of the female portraits of Orlando (as indeed she is, later in the novel). When, instead, Scalero unveils the androgynous analogy between Vita and Orlando—the man, her ellipses allow readers either to notice the destabilizing ambiguity of this male-to-female resemblance, or rather think, more traditionally, of the genetic patrimony of a forefather who might have reappeared on the face of Vita, the latest descendant of Lionel Sackville, Seventh Earl and First Duke of Dorset (the nobleman chosen by Virginia Woolf to represent Orlando as an ambassador). In alighting upon this unstated, yet ghostly hovering ambiguity, these ellipses serve an important rhetorical purpose.

The potential of these unfinished sentences reappears immediately when, in the second instance, Scalero argues how Orlando could be seen as a “brave psychological study which, while entering the most intimate and forbidden angles of the female nature and addressing questions that I would define vital for the modern woman, touches still unsolved problems…[sic]” (Scalero 11). The ellipses here allow Italian readers to make a direct association between the feelings of oppression and lack of liberty felt by Orlando in the Victorian age (O 1993: Chapter Five), confined by Addison’s definition of woman as a “‘beautiful, romantic animal’” (qtd. in O 1993: 146; emphasis mine), and the present condition of women under Fascism. However, once again, a similar interpretation is left to the imagination of the reader and, in any event, neither Scalero’s introduction nor her translation were censored or contested by the Fascist bureaucrats who approved the translation as conforming to the regime’s editorial code.

Scalero emphasized the freedom of interpretation—the very basis of her anti-censorship practice—at the end of her introduction to Orlando, when she urged readers to interpret the novel and its labyrinthine contexts and references with the space for inventiveness that modernist authors sought from their public (“Nota” 12). In order to further preserve her translation from future censure, Scalero stresses how Orlando
itself, as a whole, represents one of the “most significant works of contemporary literature, and not only from England” (“Nota” 12). This last sentence functions not only as an incentive for intransigent readers, but also as a reminder to Fascist censors of the quality of the work they were about to examine. From the very style of this introduction, and the translations Scalero was to undertake in the years ahead, including Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* and *The Lost Girl* and Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer*, we can infer that Mondadori’s choice of Scalero was influenced by her ability to deal with controversial novels. The same reason must have led Mondadori to choose her again for *Mrs. Dalloway*, but in this case, with its scandalous kissing scene with Sally Seton and subsequent loving reverie, the novel did not manage to remain untouched by the censors (see Bolchi above). Certainly, Alessandra Scalero well knew Woolf’s works by the time she translated *Orlando*. At the end of her preface to the novel, in fact, she cites *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *The Waves* as exemplary of Woolf’s literary production (“Nota” 12). Furthermore, in 1932 she had already contributed to the critical debate on *The Waves* with an article published in *Leonardo*, which she concluded with a subtle comparison between this novel, *Orlando* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, and pronounced as Woolf’s most accomplished work (“Waves”).

In 1934, Scalero’s knowledge of Woolf’s work was again validated by her presence in Mondadori’s *Pareri di lettura* (Albonetti), a collection of short and internal readers’ reports written to suggest or reject the translation project of a foreign novel. Including the reviews by Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini, the Mondadori Foundation holds the typescripts of Scalero’s reviews of *Jacob’s Room* and *The Voyage Out* (Scalero, “Pareri”). In these typescripts Scalero once again reveals her keen attention to Woolf’s style and language: “Some excerpts from the novel [*Jacob’s Room*] show a truthfully lyrical character; they are genuine poetic digressions. We already foresee in these passages the future *Orlando*” (“Pareri”). Scalero’s sensitivity to the different tones of Woolf’s prose is another strategy to prevent the intervention of the censors on her translation of *Orlando*.

Scalero’s ability to be faithful to *Orlando* and to its author without compromising with the regime is not limited to her preface, but can be clearly seen in her fitting choice of words for the Italian translation, especially in the sections of the novel focused on Orlando’s sexual metamorphosis. For instance, when Orlando’s fictional biographer, unwilling to address the reasons or eventual anatomical details of her sex change, explains, “let other pens treat of sex and sexuality; we
quit such odious subjects as soon as we can” (O 1993: 98), Scalero chooses to translate the term “odious” with “scabroso” (Woolf, Romanzi 715), which in Italian is more sexually connotative than its English counterpart and refers to a prudish reaction in response to a scandalous sexual theme. The selection of a similar adjective is undoubtedly linked with Scalero’s desire to use a connotative term which, in Italian, best describes the embarrassment and unwillingness of Orlando’s fictional biographer to deal with explicit sexual details in a work of art. The adjective “scabroso” also explicitly denies, in a way much stronger than “odioso”—the most literal translation of “odious” into Italian (as well as a translation more faithful to the Latin roots of the English adjective odious, from Lat. odiosus)—the presence of any sexual details in the novel, details forbidden by the Fascist regime. This lexical choice was the perfect translation for both stylistic and editorial reasons: it correctly translated the original work, and made it appear innocuous in the eyes of Italian censors.

Another notable example of Scalero’s linguistic sensitivity and of her ability to exploit it against the intervention of the censors can be seen in the passage when Orlando encounters Archduke Harry after her arrival in England and is told that the nobleman “had heard of her change” (O 1993: 126). In the Italian version, the term “change” becomes “trasformazione” (Woolf, Romanzi 746), transformation, which is more closely related to the fantastic leitmotif of the novel and therefore would have made the sexual metamorphosis more acceptable with its suggestion of the supernatural. Cambiamento, in Italian a more literal translation of the English “change,” would have implied a more general form of transformation, and the subversive subtext of the sexual change would have been then dangerously exposed to the censor.

The most perspicacious examples of Scalero’s ability to produce a translation true to the original within an atmosphere of harsh censorship appear in the passages of the novel where the sexual role-play becomes more evident and its inevitable multigendered allusions more explicit, as when Orlando and Nellie meet (O 1993: 149–52). While preparing for a night out in disguise as a young lord, Orlando looks at herself in a mirror and the biographer comments: “she looked the very figure of a noble lord” (O 1993: 149). Scalero chose to translate the term “figure” as “aria” (Woolf, Romanzi 775), “air,” which primarily refers to the air, or the resemblance that a character in disguise might have with the original bearer of his superimposed features. The noun “aria” safely suggests that the truthful sexual identity is the physical one, which can be only partially or temporarily conceived with
success. Orlando has therefore the air of a young man but she is not one. This makes her transvestism less threatening from a traditional heteronormative point of view. By using “aria” Scalero was not only trying to safeguard the Italian text from any abridgement, she was also being faithful to Woolf’s choice of the term “figure.” Even if the choice of “aria” is less volatile than a more literal Italian translation, it nonetheless referred to a similarly superficial and transitory image of sexuality which, sooner or later, would have given way, revealing Orlando’s feminine gender.

Probably for this same reason, when Orlando “flung off her disguise and admitted herself a woman” (O 1993: 151), Scalero chooses to translate this sentence as “gettò la maschera e confessò di esser donna” (Woolf, Romanzi 777). The reference to the mask—“maschera”—stresses the transitory value of the disguise and the playful, theatrical nature of this sexual subversion, which consequently loses most if not all of its scandalous potential. As appears evident from these examples, Scalero did not make any concessions to the censors which would have modified or betrayed the truthful meaning of Woolf’s text. She rather selected, with lexical adroitness, the translation which best conveyed Orlando’s complexities and, at the same time, eluded the censors’ search for dangerous allusions.

Most of the Pareri di lettura, which are part of the Archivio Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, contain the translators’ comments on how hard it was at the time to keep a similar balance between the duty of truthfully translating an original literary text into Italian and the sad but necessary demand of making it suitable for Fascist readers (Cembali). Any form of self-censorship must have made many Italian translators like Scalero feel as if they were misrepresenting the intention of their authors, as Vittorini noted in his review of Lawrence’s The Aaron’s Rod (“Parere”). Most of the Pareri di lettura of the 1930s called into question the legitimacy of the corrective interventions that appeared in the Italian versions.

Scalero’s shrewd translation of Orlando remains one of the most successful examples of unabridged editions of a foreign author in the Fascist era. Her methodology not only survived the censors’ assessment, but was also highly praised by reviewers and Italian critics who stressed the difficulty of finding a correspondent Italian language for the multiple tonal and thematic shades of English distinguishing Orlando and its potentially dangerous passages. On 28 September 1933 Panfilo in the Corriere della Sera praised Scalero for producing “a true Italian translation” while maintaining “the difficult rhythm of
Woolf’s narration” which “reached levels of incredible momentum” (3). Salvatore Rosati, on 16 December of the same year, emphasized how in spite of the “potentially serious and plentiful difficulties facing the translator, Alessandra Scalero had realized miracles and often managed to render the rhythm and assonances of the original” (642).

Scalero bypassed the Fascist censors while producing a linguistically and rhythmically sensitive translation of one of Woolf’s most difficult texts. In so doing, she followed the criteria of high quality and truthful devotion to the original which best fitted Mondadori’s new Medusa series and its cultured readership. Mondadori aimed at introducing new literary texts by already established foreign authors with as much respect for the original work that the political situation of 1930s Italy would have allowed. From this point of view it is worth noting that, in spite of the censorship limitations, the 1933 version of Orlando is the first and only one in Italy to maintain the original reproductions. Even the 1931 French version was published without the illustrations carefully chosen by Woolf. The choice made by Mondadori might have proven risky because it stressed the association between the androgynous figure of Orlando and Vita Sackville-West. Yet, the censors approved the images, which further enriched the prestigious Medusa collection with a text containing a visual apparatus.

The first edition of Orlando in Italian is not only a key example of a masterful translation which managed to elude the censorship office, but is still one of the most faithful and accomplished Italian translations of all of Woolf’s texts. A confirmation of this claim lies in the choice of this version for the recent 1998 collection of Woolf’s works in the Meridiani series by Mondadori—an edition with a fully critical and biographical paratext dedicated to major canonical authors. Two other translations of the text—the first in 1993 by Alberto Rossatti, published by Garzanti, and the second in 1994 by Maura Del Serra, published by Newton Compton—have been made since 1933, but Mondadori chose the original translation by Scalero. More recently, in 2007 Mondadori decided to publish the original Orlando in a limited collection of ten of its most successful Medusa titles in the past seventy-five years. It is clear that Scalero’s version still remains, more than seventy years later, one of the most exquisite linguistic renderings of Woolf’s subtleties and intertextual references into Italian. The first Italian translation Orlando has followed the destiny of its English counterpart: it is still as unchanged and unabridged as it was on 1 October 1933.
1. Even though Virginia Woolf had signed in 1929 with Treves an earlier contract which entitled them to the exclusive Italian rights on To the Lighthouse (Woolf, “Contract”), Mondadori had managed to accomplish his editorial project on Orlando starting in 1930, a year earlier than Treves.

2. All translations provided within the text are mine.

3. Charles Mauron’s French translation had been published in 1931.

4. See Bolchi’s essay in this volume.

5. It is interesting to note here that, in another context, and with another connotation, Woolf was called “the ‘Medusa’ of Bloomsbury” (see Sullivan’s essay in this collection).

6. Part of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda.

7. Mauron would soon be recognized as the father of psychoanalytic criticism. His Aesthetics and Psychology was published by the Hogarth Press in 1935, another instance of the intricate and international nature of the Woolfs’ involvement in the literary marketplace.

Works Cited

Internal Mondadori Document on Overall Sales. 10 November 1953. MS. Segreteria Editoriale Estero. Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori Foundation, Milan.
Regio Decreto n.1312 14/06/1928. [Italian State Law.] Print.


CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Appropriating Virginia Woolf for the New Humanism: Seward Collins and The Bookman, 1927–1933

YUZU UCHIDA

Virginia Woolf’s frequent contributions to several American magazines, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, form a side of her writing life influenced by financial concerns, since American magazines paid more than British ones (Lee 551). Studies of Woolf’s relationships with periodicals have explored aspects of these activities from her literary apprenticeship to her business interests. As a complement to such previous studies of Woolf and periodicals, this paper examines how one American magazine, The Bookman, a journal that promoted New Humanism, a philosophical movement endeavoring to return American society to certain humanistic values, used Woolf’s works and name for this purpose.

According to Robert Kenton Craven’s in-depth study of The Bookman, the journal began without any particular ideological tendency; however, from late 1927 to 1933, when Seward Collins became owner and editor, The Bookman was devoted to espousing the cause of New Humanism (8). Collins was such a strong a supporter of New Humanism at this time that he rejected any articles that could be construed as hostile to its philosophy (Underwood 202). Virginia Woolf’s appearance in this magazine at least ninety-four times during Collins’s era—in the form of essays, other writers’ articles on her, advertisements, and other smaller references—indicates how greatly he appreciated the
importance she had for his project of championing New Humanism. Nevertheless, Collins’s treatment of her texts was problematic: when Woolf’s writings were reprinted or quoted, they were often placed in contexts at considerable variance to those of the original.

After discussing the significance of citations of and references to Woolf in *The Bookman*, my essay will address the journal’s editorial column entitled “Chronicle and Comment,” revived by Collins and used primarily to defend New Humanism (Craven 35). Notably, mentions of Woolf appeared four times in “Chronicle and Comment.”

Though Craven claims that Collins carefully “sprinkled” writers who seemed irrelevant to New Humanism to obscure his true purpose, it is also possible, considering the way Collins used and evaluated her texts, to regard Woolf as a writer who was given an important role in the advancement of New Humanism rather than someone who was used as a mere red herring (35).

* * *

The New Humanism associated with *The Bookman* was a school of thought established by the American thinkers Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More in the late nineteenth century, and several decades later came to be the center of some controversy among literary magazines in the late 1920s to the early 1930s. The main concern of this philosophy was to secure the universal and immutable ideal status of humanity, aspiring after the “wisdom of the ages” as reflecting “normal human experience . . . set above the shifting tides of circumstance” (Babbitt, “President Eliot” 3, 4). As a means of attaining this status, Babbitt and others advocated a program of training that reinforced absolute criteria such as a “universal norm” (Babbitt, “Humanism” 28), “standards,” “the will to refrain” (Babbitt, “What” 84), and “the law of measure” (Babbitt, “What” 85), all concepts the New Humanists discovered in classical art. They believed American society to be in decline, a fall they attributed to tendencies toward romantic “self-expression” (Babbitt, “The Critic” 162), and they sought an antidote to this degraded state in the “wisdom of the ages,” a philosophy which had shaped the human mind with an emphasis on “controlling emotion” (Scholes 252).

This inclination to conservative values, and tradition in general, invited mixed reactions, including fierce criticism. More and Babbitt were celebrated as saviors of tradition in “Chronicle and Comment” in the November 1929 *Bookman* (299), while elsewhere, their old-fashioned, patriarchal attitude toward the younger generation generated
considerable hostility (Collins, “Criticism” 243). As revealed in the anti–New Humanist criticism of Malcolm Cowley, this reaction focused on their antiquated adherence to tradition and their failure to address real problems of contemporary society such as poverty, urban decay, and crime (Cowley 302–05).

One contemporary issue that the New Humanists did attend to and that did give them cause for anxiety was the perceived loss of American purity. They used *The Bookman* as a forum in which to voice their concern over American identity. This concern, as Craven argues, was presented as “a united front, completely xenophobic, and completely unpolluted by foreign substances or ideas,” and one of the most noticeable aspects of New Humanism was its pursuit of such an inviolate American idea (53).

At the same time the New Humanists regarded America as an exemplar of “Western” culture, they tried to find the roots of universal humanity in broad European culture (Craven 76–77). It may appear contradictory that New Humanists sought continuity with Europe while addressing specific problems in American society in terms of cultural purity. For them, however, “America” did not simply refer to a particular nation, but also had an all-inclusive reverberation, just as Europe was a name for the stage where they thought universal humanity originated. As Norman Foerster claimed in his Preface to the anthology *Humanism and America*, “the first collection of essays by the New Humanists” (Schuchard 13), they believed America had resolved the social pattern and problems of the twentieth century and was thus responsible for solving all human problems (Foerster, Preface v–xvii). For the New Humanists, America’s problems and values were believed to be “universal”; thus, to strive for American standards as a way of renewing humanity was a way of regaining universal humanity in the twentieth century.

An example of this search for American standards is found in the New Humanists’ interest in art, particularly national literature, regarded as a means of education that could transmit the ideal state of humanity to readers (Craven 256). The idea of “America” was indispensable to their attempt to restore literature and criticism. While not a New Humanist, Ford Madox Ford, a frequent contributor to *The Bookman*, exemplifies this concern; “the birth of a nation is not fully accomplished until it has its literature,” he writes, suggesting an urgent need to establish an American literature (373). Ford’s position reveals one of the central issues for the New Humanists: namely, to be independent from British culture, and to form a specifically American literature.
Important proponents of the New Humanism such as Babbitt and Gorham Munson sought an “authentic” American literature and criticism (Babbitt, “The Critic” 171) reflective of their own theme of universality (Munson, “Our Post-War” 144).

* * *

The concept of humanity proposed by the New Humanists was simultaneously American and universal, and consequently, in the process, their attitude toward England became ambivalent. While they emphasized the need for achieving autonomous American standards and traditions, they also asserted independence from England, as Munson claims in “Our Post-War Novel.” At the same time, even as they were exhorting the importance of the tradition assumed to provide a means to reach the “universal norm” and “human law,” they reached back to Europe, particularly to England.

This tendency, also characterizing *The Bookman’s* general critical stance on literature, is apparent in the magazine’s inconsistent evaluation of Woolf, inclusive of both praise and deprecation. On the one hand Woolf was acclaimed for her status in the literary tradition with respect to historical English lineage, and with reference to her father. On the other hand her position as a representative of modernist literature, and its opposition to literary tradition, were problematic since modernists were seen as the direct adversaries of the New Humanists (Craven 142).9

Though Woolf had been previously published in the magazine,10 her official debut in Collins’s *The Bookman* came in the issue of February 1929 with Raymond Mortimer’s essay “Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Strachey.” While Mortimer himself was not a New Humanist, it is evident, judging from his introduction, that his essay was seen as furthering Collins’s purpose. Collins states, “*The Bookman* which introduces Virginia Woolf to its readers publishes a personal article about her by Raymond Mortimer” (“In the Bookman Office” xxii). By declaring that it is “a personal article,” Collins renders this text an authoritative introduction to Woolf. Notably, Mortimer not only discusses her English cultural lineage but also suggests a tie between English or more broadly “Western” culture and American readers: according to Mortimer, both Woolf’s *Orlando* and Lytton Strachey’s *Elizabeth and Essex* received a “magnificently generous reception” in America (625). Thus, Woolf and Strachey are shown as already embedded in the literary world of American readers.
In “Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Strachey” Mortimer emphasizes Woolf’s lineage in terms of literary tradition, especially in his discussion of *Orlando*. Mortimer scarcely analyzes its literary quality but rather spends an entire column elaborating on its historical background. In Mortimer’s view, *Orlando* is a chronicle of “[t]he rich historical background of the Sackvilles” whose very estate, Knole, has its roots in European culture which means, according to him, “Italian,” “Spanish,” and particularly, “English” culture; he states that “[t]he accretion of generations which you find at Knole is something peculiarly English” (628). Mortimer goes on to claim that the protagonist Orlando is an “embodiment” of Knole, inhabited by successive generations of Sackvilles. In addition to providing a detailed description of *Orlando*’s historical background, Mortimer attributes Woolf’s literary talent to her inheritance of a long tradition from previous generations, and declares, in general, that talent is “a quality of inherited culture” (629).

Mortimer’s emphasis on Woolf’s literary inheritance from her predecessors is the most significant feature of “Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Strachey.” Though Woolf’s own creativity seems to be acknowledged to a certain extent, ultimately her genius is downgraded and erased. This way of considering Woolf defers to New Humanism in terms of its downplaying the imagination. For example, in “The Embattled Humanists,” a text summarizing the main ideas of New Humanism, Munson argues against Theodore Dreiser: “if only,” he wishes, “his imagination had been trained in the larger tradition of literature” (“The Embattled” 405). For the New Humanists the unleashing of the authorial imagination was hardly a goal; rather, the imagination must be shaped and regulated by tradition. Moreover, as Craven points out, New Humanists thought that literature should be understandable for readers familiar with classic literature; creative experimentation was, they believed, selfish and detestable (255–56).11

In the process of disparaging Woolf’s experimentalism, the New Humanists stripped her of her subjectivity as a literary author and reinscribed her in a tradition by locating her writing in literary history. This process is clear in the method Mortimer uses in discussing Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* and *Monday or Tuesday*. On the one hand he seems to be praising Woolf for her “liveliest imagination” (627). On the other hand he registers his ambivalence by describing it as “runaway” (627), and finally trivializes it by declaring her stories as “only sketches” (627). Mortimer’s approval of Woolf’s work is not based on her prominent
imagination; what he really values is the evocativeness of the historical background in her works.

In his discussion of *To the Lighthouse* he cites “the old man” whom readers will recognize as Woolf’s father Sir Leslie Stephen (628) to illustrate the way Woolf’s characters attain substance and depth only because they are based on real people. The literary patriarch Sir Leslie provides the grounding of Mortimer’s evaluation of Woolf’s work. In Mortimer’s analysis Leslie Stephen is not the only one who casts a patriarchal shadow over Woolf’s works; he introduces her as a direct descendant of English intellectuals such as Thackeray, and the “Darwins, Maitlands, and Symondses” (625). By relocating Woolf’s achievement in this august literary and intellectual tradition, Mortimer simultaneously reduces her own accomplishments. Woolf is thus positioned at the end of a male line of academia and literature, and is represented as an inheritor of English culture. Furthermore, Mortimer says that the work Stephen himself had failed to complete is now being “repeated in another form in his daughter’s novels,” and “in the persons of their descendants, [fathers] are now completing their task” (625). Here Woolf becomes a mouthpiece, an amanuensis, a scribe for Stephen who provides the literary work his descendant will finish.

Mortimer is not the only *Bookman* contributor who links Woolf with her father. In one of his “Chronicle and Comment” pieces Collins claims that Babbitt and More might be ranged alongside “the British critics after Matthew Arnold” such as Leslie Stephen (“Chronicle” October 1929: 178). This reference suggests that Collins, with perhaps some degree of condescension, appreciated Stephen as a thinker and predecessor of the founders of New Humanism. One likely reason for the New Humanists’ interest in Stephen is his role as the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (Mortimer 625), still the standard reference work of notable figures from British history and, as Christine MacLeod and Alessandro Nuvolari remark, in itself a monumental memorial of national culture (762–63). Collins’s preference for Stephen continues to the end of his editorship of *The Bookman*; in his February 1933 “Chronicle and Comment,” subtitled “Mrs. Woolf on Leslie Stephen” (156–57), he quotes from Woolf’s memoir on her father published previously in *The Times* (Woolf, “Leslie Stephen”). In this column, Collins reveals his true interest in his attempt to persuade Woolf to write her father’s biography (“Chronicle” February 1933: 157). By recommending that Woolf write a memoir of her father, Collins gives her the role of filling in the gap of twenty-five years since the previous
biography had been written, and of reviving Leslie Stephen’s spirit in the present day.

* * *

In addition to presenting her as a guardian of tradition, especially of the literary–historical tradition of her father and forefathers, Collins’s publication of Woolf altered her texts so that they could be read as expressing some of the key concepts of New Humanism. In some cases Woolf’s modernist traits are erased and a continuity with the past is emphasized. The best example of this manipulation of Woolf’s texts can be found in the December 1932 “Chronicle and Comment.” In this column, “we,” supposedly the editor and a reader of *The Bookman*, are fictionally invited to Woolf’s parlor. However, what is presented as Woolf’s words spoken in her parlor is an assemblage of “quotations” from *The Common Reader, Second Series*, a selective set of words achieved by deceptive cutting and pasting. Consequently, Woolf’s opinion is reshaped into an exposition of New Humanist ideas.

These drastic changes are most noticeable when Collins quotes from her essay, “Robinson Crusoe,” where his appropriation is enacted through two processes: first, by eliminating Woolf’s stress on the individuality of the author, and second, by presenting “Robinson Crusoe” as a conclusion to Woolf’s other essays in *The Common Reader*. Collins says,

> It is all too delightful to leave. Something she has said, however, recurs to us as we turn to go: “In masterpieces—books, that is, where the vision is clear and order has been achieved... our vanity is injured because our own order is upset; we are afraid because the old supports are being wrenched from us; and we are bored—for what pleasure or amusement can be plucked from a brand new idea...?” (836; omissions in text made by Collins)

Collins takes Woolf’s text and provides a context of his part as visitor or, metaphorically, reader; however, such is the fraudulence of the encounter that it might be better to refer to the additions as a con-text. This part of Collins’s con-text reads as if it were the speaker/reader’s recollection of Woolf’s talk. The quotation functions as a summary of what Woolf has said to her visitor, Collins, as well as a summary of *The Common Reader, Second Series* as a whole. Given this quotation, readers may think that Woolf viewed “masterpieces” as the emanations of a collectivity that exists beyond individuality, and that when
she mentions “order,” she means the absolute order overwhelmingly imposed above any one individual’s perspective. An examination of what Woolf really did say, untouched by Collins’s work of cutting and pasting, reveals a very different perspective (the italicized sections indicate Collins’s cuts).

In masterpieces—books, that is, where the vision is clear and order has been achieved—he inflicts his own perspective upon us so severely that as often as not we suffer agonies—our vanity is injured because our own order is upset; we are afraid because the old supports are being wrenched from us; and we are bored—for what pleasure or amusement can be plucked from a brand new idea? Yet from anger, fear, and boredom a rare and lasting delight is sometimes born. (“Robinson” 53)

The first omitted phrase, “he inflicts his own perspective upon us so severely that as often as not we suffer agonies,” expresses a central idea of Woolf’s essay. Notably, we can see Woolf’s emphasis on “he” and “his,” pronouns indicating the presence of an author behind every novel as the creator of his own world.

Collins also ignores several sentences preceding this quotation, where Woolf mentions authors such as Hardy and Proust. In these missing lines, Woolf describes their process of literary production: “by the sweat of his brow he brings order from chaos; he plants his tree there, and his man here; he makes the figure of his deity remote or present as he wills” (“Robinson” 53). In the original text, Woolf claims that for novels to be masterpieces, they must be permeated by each author’s individual perspective as opposed to some common sense of order. Moreover, Woolf’s original version describes the process of reading as a confrontation between the reader and the author. Readers, for Woolf, cannot be passive entities only there to be influenced by the author, as we see in Collins’s version. Woolf says that readers are full of “expectation” (54) when they start reading a book, and this expectation is intensely personal and individual, too, for it is based on their own “vision[s] of the world” informed by their “own experience[s]” and “prejudices” (52). In this confrontation, however, readers succumb ultimately to the author’s power even though they initially try “to control the novelist’s perspective so that it shall resemble and reinforce their own” (53). Woolf says that between readers and the author a clash or conflict is generated, and since the novel goes against readers’ expectations, they may become afraid or angry, or feel bored. These seemingly negative emotions are,
according to Woolf, necessary in reading; they are a part of the interaction with the author which help readers find the novel’s meaning.

Woolf’s concept of literature expressed in the essay is incompatible with that of the New Humanists, since they believed in a universal humanity which should not be affected by time or circumstance and, as Mather observes, for them literature was a representative medium of this collective ideal. What they wanted in literature was not a “clash” between the author and the reader, but, on the contrary, the confirmation of the author’s superior position and his will to represent society’s shared traditional values. Thus, Collins’s alterations of Woolf’s texts may be seen as intentional manipulations to fit them into the program of New Humanism. In regard to the concept of “order,” it is clear that Collins was aware of the difference between Woolf’s view and that of the New Humanists. For example, one year before his fictive reconstruction of the conversation in Woolf’s parlor, also in the “Chronicle and Comment” column, Collins overtly denounces Woolf’s works for lacking “better order, a fairer symmetry,” and he criticizes her attempt to supplant Bennett and to create a new form of novel (“Chronicle” December 1931: 385).

Making this point, in the same earlier commentary, he quotes her own well-known words from “Modern Fiction” with a focus on this now-famous passages: “‘Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end’” (“Chronicle” December 1931: 385). He finds “the clue to Mrs. Woolf’s failure” in this line, where he believes that instead of seeing life as “a luminous halo” we should make “a row of gig lamps” out of “a deluge of iridescent impressions.” For Collins this “row of gig lamps” is a metaphor of what he and other New Humanists regarded as the essence of art, that is, “the order, the symmetry, the willed control, the created object.” Woolf is denounced and judged a failure for not respecting this “order,” and so she suffers from a defect unacceptable to Collins and his fellow New Humanists.

Collins clearly understood that Woolf’s writing was strongly characteristic of modernism and he was also aware of the hostility of traditionalists to such characteristics; for example, he printed Storm Jameson’s “Autobiography and the Novel” which fiercely denounces modernist writers, including Woolf, for failing to adhere to conventional norms in her writing. Collins’s recognition of Woolf as a modernist is also evident in his use of her name, “Mrs. Woolf,” to typify a whole school, the school that is fast-raising such an iron-bound
tradition of anti-traditionalism,” and he condemns her for being a leader of this group (“Chronicle” December 1931: 383–84). For the New Humanists, with their fundamental belief that a novelist should offer “moral” value through their work, modernists opposed all they stood for and thus should be stridently criticized (Craven 45).

Collins’s purpose of relocating Woolf in a tradition through his contextual revision and elision of her texts was an attempt to challenge modernist literature. In seeming contradiction to this effort he criticizes Woolf as a modernist. Considering the seriousness of the threat of modernism as perceived by the New Humanists, Collins’s simultaneous condemnation and concealment of Woolf’s modernist characters are not incompatible. Rather, his treatment of Woolf can be understood as an endeavor to destroy the basis of modernist literature by highlighting a contradiction which he believed he noted in her; that is to say, although she was a representative of modernism, she unconsciously approved the New Humanists’ creed.

* * *

The Bookman edited and emended certain characteristics out of Woolf’s manifold writings, in particular drawing her into the New Humanist argument on tradition. In spite of this misappropriation, there seems to have been little direct response by Woolf, to judge from the extant correspondence between Woolf and Collins (Woolf, Letter to Seward Collins), her diary, and her letters to her friends and family. This distancing of herself from the publication of her work is unusual for Woolf. Typically she was very conscious of her reception in the periodicals, like Vogue and The Forum, to which she was also contributing at the time, and about which she frequently commented in private writing, defending herself when she found her reception to be unjust. The possible reasons for her marked silence in the case of The Bookman can therefore only be speculated on, though such silence had the consequence of lending her weight to a program and an ideology with which she can hardly have agreed. Woolf’s involvement with and misappropriation by The Bookman thus function for later critics as something of a caveat in analyzing authorial intentions from this kind of serial publication. From the ways in which she was described, published, and appropriated by Collins, it may be seen how an ideologically traditionalist American group of readers and writers responded to Woolf as either a leading representative of a modernism they feared and despised, or as a great writer within the great tradition.
This research was made possible by the visiting scholar program sponsored by Waseda University and UC Berkeley. I would also like to thank Professors Anthony Martin and Yoko Fujimoto in the English Department at Waseda for their continuous support and encouragement.

1. See, e.g., Mepham, Lee, Garrity, Sparks, Dubino, and Daugherty.
2. Woolf published two of her own essays in *The Bookman*, “Geraldine and Jane” and “Phases of Fiction” (Kirkpatrick and Clarke 287).
3. For example, see “The Londoner” (1923) and “Some Younger English Novelists” (1925).
4. Collins’s enthusiasm for “Chronicle and Comment” also appears in an announcement of new programs in *The Bookman* in October 1929; he declares that “Chronicle and Comment” would be “revived” as “an independent and authoritative monthly survey.”
6. “Standards” is a frequent word in Babbitt’s articles including “President Eliot and American Education,” “The Critic and American Life,” and “What I Believe.”
7. For a general outlook on the New Humanism, see Babbitt (*Democracy and Leadership* and “The Critic and American Life”); Karier; Nevin; and Spiller et al.
8. Stern and Haraway note that the loss of American purity and identity was a primary social concern of the day.
10. See above, n2.
11. Mather claims that an artist, including a novelist, should adopt shared ideas, rather than indulge in “his individual taste” or “his own genius” (113).
12. Collins’s depiction of modernist writers concurs with Gorham Munson’s, who, quoting from More’s “The Modern Current in American Literature” (131), describes the modernists as “self made men with no inherited background of culture” (“The Embattled” 405).
13. Craven points out that Collins saw modernism as an enemy and “the cause of all present ill.”

**Works Cited**


We all judge books by their covers. Browsing in unfamiliar stacks, we are attracted to a book by a name, title, aesthetic, or familiar image on its cover. When we encounter books we already know or have read, however, how do we react to various covers? When we approach the work of, say, Virginia Woolf, how does a new cover influence our experience of a familiar text? How might the text determine our interpretations of the covers? Will readers new to Woolf select one available edition over another on the strength of images, typography, or other presentational elements on the book’s front? Simply put, does the cover really matter?

Gérard Genette would answer that yes, the cover matters. His 1987 bibliographical study *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* offers a helpful theoretical framework for examining the graphic elements present on Woolf’s covers. Genette defines a paratext as a production—a preface, table of contents, cover, author photograph—with a special relation to the text: “they surround and extend it, precisely in order to present it, in the usual sense of the word, but also in the strongest sense: to make present, to ensure the text’s presence in the world, its ‘reception’ and consumption in the form of a book” (1; Genette’s emphasis). He taxonomizes and delineates the specific functions of the variety of paratexts, showing their contribution to the reader’s experience of the
main text. He differentiates between peritexts, elements that physically accompany the text (e.g., prefaces, jacket copy, author photographs) and epitexts—texts separate from the book that create its context, such as reviews or author interviews. Although the majority of Genette’s paratexts are verbal or textual, the cover’s pride of place and carefully deployed visual impact render it a powerful (but not necessarily accurate) communicator of what he calls “paratextual messages” (4).

Tracing the emergence of the printed cover back to the 1820s, Genette claims that “once the possibilities of the cover were discovered, they seem to have been exploited very rapidly” (23). He distinguishes between jackets (the removable paper appendages) and covers (the actual fronts of books) and their respective roles, observing succinctly, “The most obvious function of the jacket is to attract attention, using means even more dramatic than those a cover can or should be permitted: a garish illustration, a reminder of a film or television adaptation, or simply a graphic presentation more flattering or more personalized than the cover standards of a series allow” (28). In the realm of mass market and trade paperbacks, however (to which my analysis will be confined), the roles of dust jacket and cover become conflated: the soft cover not only materially encloses the pages of the text, it also assumes the dual functions of conveying information (title, author, etc.) and offering visual appeal to potential purchasers. The evolution of Woolf paperback covers over the past sixty or so years—from early Penguin series to more recent scholarly editions—bears out Genette’s claims about the nature and uses of the fronting visual elements. And, if “a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed” (3) what paratext is more immediately influential to a would-be reader than a brightly colored, stylishly lettered cover, face out on a bookshelf at Barnes and Noble?

Tellingly, Genette groups “the cover and its appendages” under the heading “the publisher’s peritext,” with the author nowhere in sight. Each successive cover design reflects the aesthetic production values of the time period, country, imprint, or targeted audience, rather than the author’s intentions or values. In fact, the permutations of the text as represented by the ever-changing covers could be considered an extension of the “versioning” of Woolf traced so deftly by Brenda Silver in Virginia Woolf Icon. Each cover proffers the text anew, generating an agglomeration of images. The trio of books whose paperback covers I have chosen to survey—Mrs. Dalloway, A Room of One’s Own, and The Waves—reveals a unique set of content-cover relations and marketing trends. While they represent a range of genres, the three
books nonetheless emerged onto the market in the relatively short span of time between 1925 and 1931. The first two titles, more popular today with readers, are republished more frequently than the third and sell more copies.\(^2\) All appeared first under the Hogarth Press imprint, featuring covers by Vanessa Bell and overseen by Woolf herself. One would expect that Bell’s designs, generally a mixture of abstract, decorative, and architectonic elements, would have set a precedent for a cover iconography that gestures toward the text in a symbolic though not directly illustrative way. Subsequent book jackets, however, often fail to treat Woolf’s texts with as much nuance or subtlety, instead succumbing to a more literal representation and a more direct market appeal. In the following pages, I will discuss a selection of the covers (and the marketing dynamics that generated them) attached to *Mrs. Dalloway*, *A Room of One’s Own*, and *The Waves*. Even a brief survey reveals multiple strategies by which these works have been variously represented, reissued, reprinted, repackaged and otherwise “versioned” (à la Silver) for commercial purposes. Furthermore, the covers themselves shed light on the literary, cultural, and aesthetic value systems that produced them and into which they emerged.

Arguably Woolf’s most popular novel, *Mrs. Dalloway* has been in print since its first publication in 1925, reissued in various hard- and soft-cover editions, and translated into dozens of languages. The strong title character and the detailed representation she receives at Woolf’s hand have tended to inspire a straightforwardly figural cover illustration. Vanessa Bell’s original dust jacket, an amalgam of recognizable forms and abstractions in black and white accented by strokes of yellow, features no figures but “anticipates, if only in a general way, the alternating exhilaration and fear, sanity and insanity, as well as life and death which pervade the book” as Diane Gillespie has observed (258–59).\(^3\) In Bell’s design, the title and author’s name, angular and imperfect as if cut out or stenciled, occupies the top third. The bottom third contains an open fan shape echoing a bouquet of yellow flowers beside it, suggestive of Clarissa Dalloway’s class privilege and the “glittering array” of her party.

In the center sits a wide band of white with five black ovals, the largest in the middle, and the two on the end half hidden by an undulating form around the border, perhaps a ruffled curtain. This shape merges decoration and function and holds with Bell’s frequent practice of creating a frame around the various cover elements—a nod, perhaps, to the material and metaphorical domestic interiors so crucial to Woolf’s writing. As for the oval shapes, they resemble a bridge reflected in
water or a stand of trees and the spaces between them. The inscrutable forms also recall Woolf’s remarks on writing *Mrs. Dalloway*: “I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters... The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment” (*D 2*: 263). Given the sisters’ shared sensibilities, Bell’s ambiguity and abstraction most likely convey her own sense of the novel’s psychological depth.

While Bell’s is practically the only *Mrs. Dalloway* jacket without a female figure, her design nonetheless sets a precedent for successive covers’ preoccupation with millinery and formal wear—semiotic shorthand for class status. The hat, a visual commonplace across languages and cultures, figures prominently on the cover of a 1992 Italian translation published by SE—a peculiar coincidence given that Septimus’s Italian bride Lucrezia makes hats for other women’s wardrobes. Another hat all but hides the woman on a Vintage Classics UK edition (2004), as if to suggest the shallowness and social camouflage Peter Walsh attributes to Clarissa: “Here she’s been sitting all the time I’ve been in India; mending her dress; playing about; going to parties” (41). Nor do cover designs for this novel hesitate to exploit the party: Harcourt/Harvest (1990) sports a hand-tinted-looking photograph of women dressed for a garden gala, flanked by men in boaters. The Wordsworth Classics (1998) and Broadview (2000) editions picture men and women in Edwardian-era evening wear seated at an elaborate dining table.

In characterizing Clarissa, Woolf gives clear indications that her heroine, while still attractive, inhabits a comfortable middle age. English and American covers of *Mrs. Dalloway* comply with images of fiftyish matrons (e.g., the elegant, white-haired woman in fur coat and white gloves on the Oxford World’s Classics 2007 edition). More than one European publication, however, depicts a woman of younger years than the Clarissa of 1923—and more eroticized than Woolf’s description suggests she might be, even in the Bourton years. In particular, two Italian editions package the novel using female portraits by Polish-born art deco painter Tamara de Lempicka (1898–1980). Newton Compton Editori (n.d.) uses *Portrait of Ira P.* (1930), and a Mondadori edition from 1998, *Portrait de Madame M.* (1932). Lempicka, who was bisexual, often rendered her female subjects with a high degree of erotic charge. Placed on the cover of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the paintings’ undercurrent of same-sex desire refers obliquely to Clarissa’s infatuation with Sally Seton, to the “match burning in a crocus” (*MD*, New York, 1992: 32). So the buried Sapphism becomes overt—yet despite the centrality of Septimus Warren Smith and the assertion of the author herself that “Septimus and Mrs Dalloway should be entirely dependent on one another”
As Genette’s remarks about the “dramatic means” of the book jacket suggest, editions of *Mrs. Dalloway* capitalizing on the 1997 film version of the novel are to be expected. Like the movie itself, the 1998 Harcourt film tie-in plays up the story’s romantic aspects: on a country road surrounded by green fields and with Bourton majestic in the background, a young Peter Walsh (Alan Cox) kisses a very pretty young Clarissa (Natascha McElhone). The title, larger than Woolf’s name, appears at the bottom, followed by the caption, “Now a motion picture starring Vanessa Redgrave. Adapted for the screen by Eileen Atkins.” A parsing of these dropped names exposes an appeal to two potential audiences. While even a casual filmgoer would be aware of Redgrave’s acting pedigree, Eileen Atkins’s name is best known to the smaller demographic familiar with her television adaptation of *A Room of One’s Own* (1990) and her 1994 stage play *Vita and Virginia,* in which she and Redgrave portrayed Woolf and Sackville-West, respectively.

Hard upon the marketing wave for the cinematic *Mrs. Dalloway,* a new commercial context appeared in the form of Michael Cunningham’s novel *The Hours.* The book’s tripartite narrative intersperses a fictionalized account of Woolf’s writing life and suicide with the stories of a disaffected 1950s housewife reading *Mrs. Dalloway* and a revisionist, late-twentieth-century version of Clarissa. Published in 1998, the Pulitzer Prize–winning novel was followed by a film in 2002, also a commercial and critical success. Nominated for nine Oscars, including Best Picture, the film garnered Nicole Kidman a Best Actress Award for her portrayal of Woolf (and featured Eileen Atkins in a cameo as flower shop assistant Barbara, an analogue to *Mrs. Dalloway’s* Miss Pym). In 2002, harnessing the power of association, Harcourt/Harvest enhanced its original 1990 cover of *Mrs. Dalloway* with a gold “seal” reading, “the novel that inspired *The Hours*” and adding Michael Cunningham’s laudatory description of the book as “Beautiful, complex…incisive. One of the most moving, revolutionary artworks of the twentieth century.” The popularity of Cunningham’s own version of *Mrs. Dalloway* renders him an authority and his critical assessment a cover-worthy epitext—illustrating Genette’s claim that “every context serves as a paratext” (8).5

Like *Mrs. Dalloway,* *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) is enduringly popular and frequently published. Vanessa Bell’s cover design for Woolf’s extended essay, a minimalist clock against a cavernous dark blue
arch-shaped field, implies that creative time is as vital as creative space. Bell underscores the subject of the book by ever-so-slightly gendering the space via decorative elements reading as feminine: the arch is bordered by pearls or beads and framed along the bottom by a repeated scallop, perhaps a curtain. Praising her sister’s work in a letter—a “private epitext” (Genette 371)—Woolf exclaimed, “I forgot to say I thought your cover most attractive—but what a stir you’ll cause by the hands of the clock at that precise hour!” (L 4: 81). Alluding to the formation of their shared initial “V” by the clock hands set at 10:00 and 2:00, Woolf’s comment hints at the sisters’ frequent aesthetic collusion.

If Bell’s design suggests creativity’s need for time along with space, subsequent covers treat the content much more literally. As occurred with Mrs. Dalloway, mass market covers for A Room depart from Bell’s suggestive still life to incorporate figures, often appropriating existing paintings or old photographs of a solitary woman writing, reading, or in private reverie. She is almost always in period dress, as if to dramatize Woolf’s references to Shakespeare’s sister or to literary foremothers like Jane Austen and George Eliot. (She is never—that I have seen—a woman of color.) Illustrated covers for A Room keep its egalitarian literary project firmly (and literally) on the forefront, encoded in the recurring depictions of women filling domestic space with intellectual activity, not housework.

And speaking of encoding: one startlingly graphic cover emerged among the swell of feminist critical attention paid Woolf in the 1970s, a visual representation of the gender struggle being waged in literary studies (figure 15.1). In a 1970s-era cover drawing for A Room of One’s Own, a fountain pen looms straight and tall, its point in the air, and casts a long shadow on the wall. On the right sits an overstuffed chair, and in the middle a blue flower with a curved stalk; a perfectly round orange sun shines over all. These elements, rendered with a Peter Max–like cartoonishness, are visually linked by their shared hues of green, blue, and orange. Given the discourse of the time around such gendered terminology as “pen/penis” or “phallogocentrism,” one is hard-pressed to avoid reading the image as a commentary on male ascendancy in the fields of literary production and criticism: the flower of feminine creativity approaches the male-dominated literary tradition from within a bounded and confining domestic space. In content and style, the Harcourt cover capitalizes on the era’s resurgence of interest in Woolf and its emerging feminist scholarship.

The same politics that inform cover designs for A Room of One’s Own also render the book itself a perfect candidate for a recent
anti-piracy advertising campaign, designed for Oxford Booksellers by the India-based Mudra agency (figure 15.2). A cleverly retouched image of the book’s spine lists its author as “Vagina Wolf,” accompanied by the stern warning, “Every time you buy a pirated book, you disrespect its author.” The suggestion of *vagina dentata* in this play on Woolf’s name, so opposite the book’s pro-woman politics, only heightens the ad’s impact. In a curious twist on the paratextual function, this ad tweaks the cover material so integral to the realm of marketing to “sell” fair and legal commodification to would-be pirates.
Harcourt’s Harvest imprint (the publisher of the “disrespected” *Room* above) gets a serious run for its money from Penguin as a publisher of Woolf. Penguin’s first paperback edition of *A Room of One’s Own* featured the now-classic 1940s-era “horizontal grid” (Baines 19). Sandwiched between a band of lavender at top and bottom (indicating “essays and belles-lettres”), a white central field bears the title horizontally in black and the genre vertically in either side margin. The top stripe includes the words “Penguin Books” within a vaguely diamond-shaped form. Flanking the Penguin colophon at bottom—the *dancing* version of the icon, no less—are the words “complete” and “unabridged.”

Sixty-odd years since its first appearance, this vintage aesthetic has become a product in its own right. Penguin has licensed dozens of its classic covers—among them *A Room of One’s Own*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Great Gatsby*—to appear on all manner of useful household items. How about a replication of Woolf’s classic title upon a coffee mug, tea towel, tote bag, or deck chair of one’s own? This first Penguin series made no attempt to illustrate, interpret, or otherwise refer to the book’s content; thus the design itself—not the intellectual property within—has become the transferable commodity. The sequence of cover and textual content are here reversed: rather than serving as an enticement to read, the cover becomes synecdoche for one’s already acquired familiarity with Woolf’s feminist treatise. The marketing strategy for these products depends upon the literary cachet of drinking one’s coffee from, carrying one’s belongings in, or placing one’s behind upon the title of one’s favorite book.

Subsequent Penguin releases have featured more pictorial packaging, and Phil Baines’s survey of cover series details the purposes and audiences for some of the imprints reissuing Woolf titles. Reflecting a general trend of late toward pared-down aesthetics (à la *Real Simple* magazine), the covers of Penguin’s most recent editions of *A Room*, like Bell’s original design, dispense with the figure. A 2002 Penguin Modern Classics edition cover shows a French language book open upon a table with a red ribbon and a gold key strewn across the page,

![Figure 15.2](image-url)
signs of cerebral activity by the room’s (presumably female) occupant. Like other designs in the series, “the typographic element is restrained, being incorporated with the logo in a small silver panel” at the bottom of the cover (Baines 230).

A Penguin Great Ideas title from 2004 takes an alternative approach to the same text. Intended “as a way of introducing a different readership to key texts that have helped shape civilization,” the Great Ideas series covers are “typographically led” and “set in a manner suggestive of the lettering or typography of the time of the work’s first publication” (244). The cover for *A Room of One’s Own* makes ample use of white space, providing the author’s name in red at the top and the title just beneath in black. The zone of female creativity is indicated by a black-ink drawing of an ornately dressed window and the red-lettered caption, “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write.” Every cover in the series uses red and black (“traditional printer’s colours”) and features a portion of the text in debossed print on raw paper stock. These design elements give “the appearance in many cases of an old-fashioned title page, as though the book had no cover at all,” as if to roll back the history of the material book to the early nineteenth century, when printed covers first appeared (244). Prior to that, “the title page was the main site of the publisher’s paratext” (Genette 23). Treating the book’s cover as if it were not a cover at all but the first page of the text lends an urgency to the civilization-altering writing within—as if the ideas were too vital to be contained and so spill out onto the book’s material surface.

The most variety-laden cover story, however, belongs to *The Waves*. Bell’s original dust jacket, one of the few designed with front and back images, incorporates the novel’s tension between human identity and natural processes. Two figures on the cover, sketched in light green pointillistic dots against wave-like forms, flank a dark red flower. On the back an entire vase of flowers sits by a window, which frames the ocean. While the waves resound throughout, the flower image bridges the interludes—in which at one point “the real flower on the windowsill was attended by a phantom flower”—and the monologues, specifically Bernard’s “seven-sided flower” evoked at the last dinner with Percival, “a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution” (New York 2006: 53; 91–92). Bell’s impressionistic figures suggest the relative ambiguity of the characters (as opposed to the sharply drawn contours of Clarissa Dalloway), as well as Woolf’s own assertion of the six voices’ similarity (*L 4*: 397).
Although subsequent covers of *The Waves* take an obvious route by depicting the sea, the simplicity and beauty of these ocean views do not generally “interfere” with or shape the reader’s experience of the text in the way that the figure of a woman on the cover of *Mrs. Dalloway* might. If anything, these sea pictures reflect the novel’s striking colorism.9 The sepia tones of the Harcourt Harvest edition recall the muted beginning of the color-saturated day (“The sun had not yet risen”) or its later hours, when “[t]he hard stone of the day was cracked and light poured through its splinters” (New York 2006: 1, 152). Furthermore, the image on the Harcourt cover is framed like an old glass-plate photograph, a visual illustration of the sea’s function as a framing device, or of Woolf’s frequent use of the window as a viewfinder, both hallmarks of *The Waves*’ narrative innovation.

More than one recent cover, however, would seem to deflect—perhaps not deliberately—the modernist experimentation Woolf enacts in *The Waves* by packaging the novel in the same style one might adopt for, say, a work by Jane Austen (figure 15.3). Several editions feature representative figural paintings, none of them even as daring as a Cézanne.10 Perhaps intended to “reassure” readers who might be intimidated by Woolf’s unorthodox approach to characterization and novelistic structure, these highly representational images of figures by the sea are aesthetically retrograde—if not entirely misleading.

As a refreshing antidote to bland, predictable, or poorly chosen covers, Penguin UK (clearly a book design innovator) launched its “My Penguin” campaign in November 2006 with the slogan, “Books by the Great. Covers by You.” Publishing six books with unadorned covers (save for the small orange, black, and white Penguin logo in the lower right hand corner), Penguin invited readers to design their own jackets and submit the results to the publisher.11 As one of the first six “naked” titles, *The Waves* kept interesting company with *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Crime and Punishment*, Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*, and *Emma*.12 According to the Penguin UK Blog, in “consumer research conducted on what factors matter to people when they decide whether or not to pick up a book in a bookshop, the cover design comes out as most important” (Conford). Acting on this information, Penguin returned creative control to reader-consumers, encouraging participation in the construction of the material book. Like the early Penguin graphics on mugs and tote bags, a reader-generated cover reverses the trajectory of textual experience. Rather than moving from attractive cover to point of purchase and subsequently into the main text, the reader of an “un-covered” book has almost assuredly encountered
and absorbed the text *before* purchase. The non-cover attracts readers by offering the opportunity to create an interpretive paratext of one’s own. Four designs for *The Waves* appear on the Penguin website, each emerging directly out of readerly experience and ranging from the obvious to the sublimely simple.

The most innovative of these, by Alvin Helmandi, distinguishes itself from other cover designs for *The Waves* in which the sea figures prominently. Instead, Helmandi incorporates the six voices and prismatic

Figure 15.3  An example of a cover for *The Waves* out of keeping with the novel’s experimental prose. Wordsworth Classics edition, 2000.
color of the novel, evoking Woolf’s nuanced treatment of consciousness and emotional complexity (figure 15.4). Beneath the title, hand-printed in lower-case letters, the freehand design depicts two horizontal rows of three faces, each tinted differently. The illustrator assigns a particular color value and emotional component (hope, fear, regret, triumph, unity, or isolation) to each face. Unconnected to character names, the faces also remain ungendered, leaving room for the universality expressed by Bernard in the novel’s closing pages and avoiding the pre-fabricated suggestions mass-market cover design images often impose.

Figure 15.4  An insightful “My Penguin” cover for The Waves, designed by Alvin Helmandi, 2006. (Reproduced with kind permission of Penguin UK.)
Among the most recent Woolf series to be published is Harcourt's set of annotated titles edited by noted Woolf scholars. On their very covers, these editions of Mrs. Dalloway, A Room of One's Own, and The Waves carry some obvious signs of the market share on which they stake a claim (i.e., a readership that might, perhaps, be found perusing a collection of essays about Woolf and the literary marketplace). Aimed at a more scholarly audience, these annotated texts are enveloped in modernist abstraction: Severini's Ballerina (1914) covers A Room of One's Own; Kandinsky's Accent in Pink (1926) appears on Mrs. Dalloway; and Klee's Rainy Day (1931) graces the cover of The Waves. The non-representational cover art generally bears no direct relation to the titles or contents of the works, except perhaps in the case of The Waves. The novel and painting date from the same year, and Klee's undulating blue forms obliquely suggest Woolf's rhythmic prose and use of the sea as a structuring device—proving, perhaps, that even abstract cover designs cannot help but hold some sort of interpretive sway over readers.

As annotated editions, these Woolf texts contain a pronounced peritext. When the annotator's name appears on the cover, his or her work and reputation become part of the peritextual apparatus. In the case of the three novels under discussion here, each annotator is a prominent female scholar. Annotations for Mrs. Dalloway and The Waves are the respective work of Bonnie Kime Scott and Molly Hite. Meanwhile, Madwoman in the Attic co-author Susan Gubar has annotated and introduced A Room of One's Own—quite fitting considering both her groundbreaking feminist criticism and her 2006 study of women's literature, Room of Our Own.

In this short space, I have outlined a few general trends in cover design, interrogating them as acts of interpretation or gateways to the experience of three Woolf texts. The main inquiry I wish to end with, however, is this: can we actually read—or even reread—Woolf's writing immune to the influence of the covers bookending the text in our hands? I do not think that we can, and the material and interpretive considerations offered by my own copies of these books bear out this claim. As a college student, I found Mrs. Dalloway in my parents' library, a Harcourt/Harvest edition specially issued for Quality Paperback Books and sporting an Omega Workshops–like feel. Indeed, a note at the back indicates that Monica Elias's cover was “inspired by and based on Vanessa Bell’s original design for the book.” The title at the top and author's name at the bottom, in a purple-brown color, appear hand-lettered, and surround a none-too-flattering portrait by Vanessa Bell of her husband Clive's mistress Mary Hutchinson. Irony
and Bloomsburian marital unorthodoxy aside, however, the purportedly authentic cover seems at odds with Bell’s generally nonfigural designs for Virginia’s books.

Although I purchased *A Room of One’s Own* for my very first graduate course and pored over its pages for hours, I had to pull it from the shelf to remind myself of its front: grey lettering on a white background, with a drab and brown, semi-abstracted image of an unoccupied chair and a door in the foreground. This Harcourt/Harvest edition from 1981, if unmemorable, nonetheless exists on a thematic continuum, looking back to the publisher’s 1970s feminist cover with phallic pen and forward to the 1990s edition of a daydreaming woman in period dress.

As for my first copy of *The Waves*, while traveling in England I had the good fortune to purchase (for 80p) a 1946 Hogarth Press hardcover “new edition” in York from Ken Spelman Books (which charmingly wrapped all purchases in brown paper). In my early twenties at the time, I knew only that the book was startlingly cheap and that it was a Woolf I had not yet read. (*The Waves* came sans dust jacket, but I like to think that Vanessa’s cover design enwrapped it at one point.) Later, when the time came to mark up the text, I purchased a paperback Harvest edition; some reverential restraint kept me from taking notes in the vintage Hogarth copy.

The covers, editions, and other paratextual elements of the Woolf books in my library increase in relevance the more I learn about Woolf, book production, and Bloomsbury. Indeed, all book jacket designs accumulate resonance over time. Deployed initially as “pretty faces” to attract interest and purchase, cover designs are neither static, nor released into an economic or cultural vacuum. In their typefaces, pricing (e.g., the old Penguin 3’6), jacket matter, and images, paperback covers carry the traces—not of their genuses, as paperbacks are almost always reissues—but of their journeys. As fixed texts pass through fluctuating design fads, marketing strategies, author reputations, and critical trends, the covers actually critique us—the publishers, buyers, and readers—far more accurately than we judge the books they enclose.

**Notes**

1. Silver defines versioning, the lynchpin of her analysis, as “the production of multiple versions of [Woolf’s] texts or her image”—surely book covers, the images of her texts, are implicated in this cultural process (xvi).
Don’t Judge a Cover by Its Woolf

2. A 27 February 2010 survey of Amazon.com sales numbers lists the three Harcourt/Harvest editions at the following ranks: Mrs. Dalloway, #99,680; A Room of One’s Own #105,612; and The Waves a distant #400,444.

3. See Chapter Five, “Still Lifes in Words and Paint” for discussion of Bell’s book designs (224–66); Gillespie also inventories the critical treatment of Bell’s designs for Woolf’s covers and calls for more attention to the topic (332–33 n21).

4. Covers for Gallimard (1981) and Livre de Poche (1992) both use paintings, the first of a young woman with very red lips, the second of a blonde in profile, her ermine-lined velvet cape slipping to reveal a bare shoulder.

5. Silver’s discussion of Woolf adaptations for stage and screen briefly mentions Mrs. Dalloway and predates The Hours (both novel and film) altogether but offers a theoretical framework in which both might be investigated (211–35).

6. E.g., Harcourt/Harvest (1990), Broadview (2001), and Alianza (Spain, 2005).

7. In Part One of Virginia Woolf Icon, Silver thoroughly dissects Woolf’s role as definitive emblem of the female literary tradition in discourses of and about feminism.

8. See also 700 Penguins, a selection of paperback covers including three Penguin Modern Classics Woolf titles from the mid-1960s and the original A Room of One’s Own “horizontal grid” from 1940.


11. Cf. musician Beck Hanson, whose 2006 album The Information featured a blank grid and included a portfolio of stickers for the purchaser’s use in designing a unique album cover.

12. A new slogan emerged with the second set of titles released in 2008: “that cover is naked. put something on it” (lower case sic). Rock bands and pop stars—including Beck Hanson—selected the seven newer titles and got first crack at cover design.

Works Cited


INDEX

Abbott, Reginald, 9
Academy & Literature, 4, 30
Addison, Joseph, 215
see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Addison”
advertising, 6, 13, 49, 50, 122, 130, 145, 154, 156, 159, 160, 170–75 passim, 178, 184, 187, 188, 192, 223, 243, 244
Aeschylus, see Greek philosophy and drama
Ainger, Alfred, see Woolf, Virginia, Works, “A Nineteenth-Century Critic”
Albonetti, Pietro, 216
Aleramo, Sibilla, 210, 211, 213
Alpers, Anthony, 95, 96, 104
Altick, Richard, 19
“Angel in the House,” 8, 35, 57
Angell, Norman, 159
Ardis, Ann, 44, 163
Arendt, Hannah, 80
Arnold, Matthew, 228
Atkins, Eileen, 241
Atlantic Monthly, 130
Attridge, Derek, 153
Auden, W(ystan) H., 7
Avery, Todd, 68
Babbitt, Irving, 224–25, 226, 228, 233
Baedeker, Karl, 63
Baines, Phil, 244, 245
Baldick, Chris, 147
Banfield, Ann, 86
Il Baretti, 202, 210
Barnes, Djuna, 121
“battle of the brows,” 2–3, 15, 137, 143–45, 168, 169, 174
see also highbrow; lowbrow;
middlebrow; Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Middlebrow”
Baxendale, John, 147, 148
BBC, see mass market media, radio/wireless
Bean, Heather, 14, 107–20
Beerbohm, Max, 140, 146, 147
Beetham, Margaret, 44, 50, 53, 155
Bell, Clive, 58, 60, 61, 63
Bell, Julian, 60
Bell, Quentin
Virginia Woolf: A Biography, 29, 60, 61, 210
Bell, Vanessa, 28, 60–61, 63, 65, 101, 123
book cover designs, 186, 239–45 passim, 249–51 passim
Belloc, Hilaire, 15, 137, 138, 140, 143, 145, 147, 148
Bennett, Andrew, 104
Bennett, Arnold, 7, 28, 187, 202, 231
Bennett, Paula, 104
Benson, Stella, 176
Bergson, Henri, 204
Berkman, Sylvia, 98
Bibesco, Elizabeth, 59
Index

Bingham, Adrian, 2
Biron, Sir Charles, 58
Birrell, Augustine, 49
Bishop, Edward, 4, 6, 19, 59, 61, 66, 67, 68
Blair, Sara, 189
Boehmer, Elleke, 188, 193
Bolchi, Elisa, 16, 199–208, 210
book covers, 5, 13, 17–18, 27, 151, 209, 237–51
  see also Bell, Vanessa, book cover designs; dust jackets; magazine covers
book reviews, see Woolf, Virginia, reviewing
  The Bookman, 17, 223–33
Booth, Alison, 109, 116
Bornstein, George, 182
Bosanquet, Theodora, 174
Bowlby, Rachel, 27, 37
Bradeus, David, 59
Braithwaite, R(jichard) B., 47, 49, 50, 51–53, 54
Brake, Laurel, 152, 163
Brenan, Gerald, 60
Briggs, Julia, 122, 126, 187, 192
Brittain, Vera, 175
Brontë, Branwell, 112
Brontë, Charlotte, 14, 102, 107–15, 119, 173
Brontë, Emily, 14, 107–19
  Wuthering Heights, 108, 110–15, 118
Brosnan, Leila, 3–4, 5, 11, 18, 27, 29, 37, 39, 163, 169
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 124, 125
Browning, Robert, 124, 125
Bryant, John, 193
Bullett, Gerald, 167, 168, 177
Bunin, I(van) A., 184
Burgan, Mary, 99, 104
Cambridge Apostles, 58, 64, 86
Cannistraro, Philip V., 211
capitalism, 3, 13, 19, 185, 188, 190
  see also cultural capital
Carnegie, Andrew, 163
Carrington, Dora, 60
Carroll, Berenice, 57
Caughie, Pamela, 9, 11, 18, 125, 126, 132
Cavendish, Margaret, 103, 105
Caws, Mary Ann, 200
Cecil, Nelly (Lady Robert Cecil), 29–30
Celenza, Giulia, 200
Cembali, Maria Elena, 218
censorship, 16–17, 199, 200, 207, 209–20
  see also Woolf, Virginia, censorship
Cerf, Bennett, 131
Cézanne, Paul, 65–66, 69, 246
Chapman, Wayne, 7
Chesteron, G(ilbert) K., 15, 112, 137
Ciano, Galeazzo, 211
Clarke, Stuart N., 38, 148, 233
Clay, Catherine, 170, 171, 176, 177
Clutton-Brock, Arthur, 148
  see also Woolf, Leonard, Works, “Rationalism and Religion”
Cole, Horace, 68
Collier, John, see Woolf, Leonard, Works, “Rationalism and Religion”
Collier, Patrick, 2, 8, 9, 10, 15, 18, 19,
  27, 37, 151–65
Collins, Seward, 17, 223–26, 228–33
  “common reader,” 9–10, 30, 92–93,
  97, 123, 144, 152, 155–56, 163,
  168–77 passim, 186, 191, 230–31,
  237–39, 245–47, 249, 250
  see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “The Common Reader,” The Common Reader
Conford, Helen, 246
Consiglio, Alberto, 200, 203–204
consumerism, 3, 145, 246
  as feminine, 3, 170, 171, 187
Cook, Matt, 66
Cork, Richard, 66
Cornford, F(rancis) M., 76, 86
Cornhill Magazine, 4, 29, 30, 95, 111
Corriere della Sera, 201, 202, 210, 218
Cowley, Malcolm, 225
Cramer, Patricia, 86
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Craven, Robert Kenton</td>
<td>224,225,226,227,232,233</td>
<td>Creative writing programs, 28, 37–38</td>
<td>The Criterion, 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croly, Herbert</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowell, Chester</td>
<td>158–59,161</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crump, R(ebecca) C. W.,</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuddy-Keane, Melba</td>
<td>2,10,11,43,137,145,148,164,169,175</td>
<td>La Cultura, 210</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural capital</td>
<td>6,14,15,108,141,142,168,169,174,177,188</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham, Michael</td>
<td>241</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis, Anthony</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily News</td>
<td>47,50,51,54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalgarno, Emily</td>
<td>85,86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daly, Saralyn R.,</td>
<td>95,104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin, Charles</td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daugherty, Beth</td>
<td>4,9–10,13,18,27–41,163,233</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day-Lewis, Cecil</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debord, Guy</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decleva, Enrico</td>
<td>210</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Gay, Jane</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delafielde, Edmée M.</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delany, Paul</td>
<td>2,18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dellamora, Richard</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denis, Maurice and Roger E. Fry</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dettmar, Kevin J. H. and Stephen Watt</td>
<td>2,18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickens, Elizabeth</td>
<td>7,13,43–55,163</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson, Violet</td>
<td>29–30,60,95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionary of National Biography</td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobb, Maurice</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobell, Sydney</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Döblin, Alfred</td>
<td>214</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dos Passos, John</td>
<td>211,214,216</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreadnought Hoax</td>
<td>58,68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubino, Jeanne</td>
<td>18,29,147,163,233</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duckworth, George</td>
<td>61,65,76–77,78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duckworth, Gerald</td>
<td>65,76–77,78,104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunbar, Pamela</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust jackets</td>
<td>6,17,54,142,206,240,241,237–51</td>
<td></td>
<td>see also Bell, Vanessa, book cover designs; book covers; magazine covers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagleton, Terry</td>
<td>185</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot, George</td>
<td>37,173,242</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot, Thomas S.</td>
<td>7,10,32,104,114–15,121,142</td>
<td>The Waste Land, 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Review</td>
<td>97,158</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eoff, Shirley</td>
<td>170</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erickson, Lee</td>
<td>152,163,182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esty, Jed</td>
<td>9,190,193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>145,146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening Standard</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezell, Margaret J. M.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabre, Giorgio</td>
<td>211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcetta, Jennie-Rebecca</td>
<td>17–18,237–52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrar, John</td>
<td>233</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascism in Italy</td>
<td>199–207,215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fawcett, Dame Millicent</td>
<td>174</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernald, Anne E.</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiera Letteraria</td>
<td>201</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint, Kate</td>
<td>57,59,69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foerster, Norman</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford, Ford Madox</td>
<td>158,225</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Forum</td>
<td>173,178,232</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foucault, Michel</td>
<td>75,80–82,83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fournier, Alain</td>
<td>210</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freud, Sigmund</td>
<td>6,19,79,101,104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fromm, Gloria G.</td>
<td>129,130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Froula, Christine</td>
<td>61,65,85,86,127,128,131,164,188,193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fullbrook, Kate</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusini, Nadia</td>
<td>205,207</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiner, Alfred G.</td>
<td>137,139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnett, Angelica</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrity, Jane</td>
<td>5,8,9,18,163,192</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaskell, Elizabeth</td>
<td>37,107,110,111,113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index

Gass, Sherlock Bronson, 233
Gay, Penny, 95, 104, 105
Gedo, John E., 69
Genette, Gérard, 237–38, 241, 242, 245
Gide, André, 121
Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar, 103, 105
Gillespie, Diane F., 29, 239, 251
Gillet, Louis, 203
Glendinning, Victoria, 45
Good Housekeeping, 145, 148, 164
Gordon, Lyndall, 8
Gori, Gigliola, 212
Gosse, Edmund, 11, 138–39
Gossip, 7, 14, 33, 91–105
Gould, Gerald, 140
Grant, Duncan, 66, 68
Greek philosophy and drama, 13, 73–82, 84–86
Griffiths, Jo, 11
“Grub Street,” 2, 95
Guaitieri, Elena, 4, 10, 18, 37
Guardian, 4, 30, 31, 32, 38, 141
“Gutter and Stamp” system, 30, 38
Hall, Radclyffe, 7, 58
Haller, Evelyn, 104, 105
Hamilton, Cicely, 171, 174
Hampson, John, 183, 184
Hankin, Cherry A., 104
Hankins, Leslie, 19
Hanson, Beck, 251
Hanson, Clare, 104
Hanson, Clare and Andrew Gurr, 104
Haraway, Donna, 225
Hardy, Thomas, 230
Hargreaves, Tracy, 128
Harper’s Bazaar, 123
Harraden, Beatrice, see Woolf, Virginia, Works, “The Scholar’s Daughter”
Harris, Susan C., 59, 68
Harrison, Jane Ellen, 76
Harrod, R(oy) F., 159
Hastings, Beatrice, 44
Hazzlitt, William, 140
Hemingway, Ernest, 121
Henderson, Hubert, 45, 48, 49
Hesse, Douglas, 147
Hicks, Sir William Joyson, 58
Highbrow, 12, 14, 15, 137, 140, 141–43, 145, 146, 147, 154, 159, 160, 167, 168, 169–77
see also “battle of the brows”; Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Middlebrow”
Hill, Katherine C., 38
Hogarth Press, 2, 5–8, 11, 16, 19, 45–46, 47, 51, 54, 57, 94, 95, 96, 104, 107, 122, 142, 169–70, 181–93, 239, 250
see also Woolf, Leonard, as publisher
Hollis, Catherine W., 184
Holtby, Winifred, 172, 175
Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno, 86
The Hours (film), 241, 251
Howe, Irving, 157–58
Humble, Nicola, 148, 169
Hussey, Mark, 68, 192
Hutchinson, Mary, 249
Huyssten, Andreas, 1–2, 145, 146
imperialism, 16, 75, 183, 188–92, 193
Ingamells, John, 69
Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique, 65–66
international marketplaces, see marketplaces, international
Isherwood, Christopher, 5, 7, 183, 184
L’Italia Letteraria, 210
Italy, 16–17
literary culture, 16–17, 199–207, 209–20
see also Fascism, in Italy
Jaffe, Aaron, 2
James, Henry, see Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Mr Henry James’s Latest Novel”
Jameson, Storm, 122, 231
Jensen, Robert, 18
John O’London’s Weekly, 59, 138
Johnson, R(eginald) Brimley, 110–11
Johnson, Samuel, 146, 148, 155
Jones, Dannell, 37–38
Index

Jordan, John O. and Robert L. Patten, 18
Joyce, James, 3, 121, 201, 203–204, 207
Kaplan, Sydney J., 104, 105
Karier, Clarence J., 233
Kauffer, E(dward) McKnight, 6, 188
Kaufmann, Michael, 10
Keating, Peter, 28, 29
Kelly, Serena, 38
Kennedy, Richard, 18, 19, 184
Kenny, Louise, see Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Two Irish Novels”
Kent, Christopher, 38
Keynes, John Maynard, 45, 48, 52, 157, 159–60
Kirkpatrick, B(rownlee) J. and Stuart N. Clarke, 38
Kitchin, C(lifford) H. B., 182, 192
Komelson, Kevin, 67
Laing, Kathryn S., 18
Lamb, Charles, 139, 140, 141
Langella, Giuseppe, 199
Lassner, Phyllis, 123, 128, 131
Latham, Sean, 18, 19, 163
Latham, Sean and Robert Scholes, 2, 153, 163
Law, Alice, 112
Lawrence, D(avid) H., 171, 201, 214, 216, 218
Leach, Henry Goddard, 178
Leavis, Q ueenie D., 167, 177
Lederer, Joe, 211
Lee, Elizabeth, 69
Lee, Hermione, 4, 8, 18, 19, 61, 104, 131, 163, 184, 190, 223, 233
Lehmann, John, 6, 7, 18, 183, 184, 192
Leick, Karen, 9, 14–15, 121–33
Lempicka, Tamara de, 240
Leonardo, 216
Levine, Lawrence, 176
Levy, Eric P., 86
Lewes, G(eorge) H., 109
Lewis, Wyndham, 121
Lilienfeld, Jane, 164
Linati, Carlo, 201, 202, 207, 210
Linati schema, 207
Linett, Maren, 128, 131
“little magazines,” 4, 7, 95, 158
see also The New Freewoman, Masses
London Mercury, 163
Long, Jean, 119
Lorimer, Adam, 28
Low, Lisa, 116
lowbrow, 2, 9, 97, 147, 173
see also “battle of the brows;” Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Middlebrow”
Loy, Mina, 121
Lubbock, Percy, 112
Lucas, E(dward) V., 137, 138, 143, 145, 146
see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “London Revisited”
Luckhurst, Nicola, 203
Lynd, Robert, 137–48 passim
see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “A Book of Essays”
Lytton, Margaret, 38
Lytton, Mrs. Arthur (Mary Kathleen), 31, 38, 141
Macaulay, Rose, 37, 172, 173, 175, 176
MacLeod, Christine, and Alessandro Nuvolari, 228
Macnamara, Katie, 7, 14, 91–106
Magalaner, Marvin, 104
magazine covers, 130, 156–57
see also book covers; dust jackets
magazines, see mass market media; see also periodicals and newspapers; and individual magazine titles: Eve, Good Housekeeping, Harper’s Bazaar, John O’London’s Weekly, Time, Vogue
Maitland, Frederick W., 228
Manet, É douard, 65–66, 69
Mann, Thomas, 211, 214
Mansfield, Katherine, 3, 14, 91–105, 183
“Bliss,” 91, 93–95, 97–102, 104
“Prelude,” 94, 96, 104, 183
Mao, Douglas, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 18
Index

Marcus, Jane, 58, 85, 86, 183, 191, 193 and women, 3, 13, 18, 59, 68, 109, 128–29, 145, 167–78 passim, 186–87; see also professionalization; Woolf, Virginia, feminism

Marcus, Laura, 7, 18, 19, 185

marketplaces, 1, 2, 8–9, 11–19, 62, 73, 75, 77, 82, 92, 107, 108, 109, 111, 128, 152–61 passim, 182, 185, 188, 249 international, 189, 192, 220 France, 203, 210 Italy, 199–207, 209–20, 240; see also Italy US, 123, 125–26, 130–31, 154, 223–33

Marshik, Celia, 7, 58, 62, 82–83

Masses, 158

Massingham, H(enry) W., 45, 51, 157

mass market media, 2–3, 10

see also entries under Woolf, Virginia anthologies, 138, 140 bestsellers, 14–15, 54, 121–32, 192 “familiar essays,” 12, 15, 137–49 and journalism, 2, 3, 10, 28, 43, 44, 137–39, 146, 156–60, 163, 175, 199; see also Woolf, Virginia, literary journalism magazines, 3, 29, 123, 145, 147, 152, 154, 158, 161, 210, 223, 224; see also magazines; individual magazine titles and marketing, 6, 17–18, 137, 139, 140–41, 147, 168–69, 187, 211, 237–51 and the mass public, 18, 75, 108, 138, 154, 170 newspapers, 2, 10, 13, 29, 30, 45, 46, 137, 138, 144, 151–53 passim, 156, 158, 159, 162, 172, 189, 210; see also newspapers; individual newspaper titles periodicals, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 37, 43–54, 137–48, 151–164, 168–78, 185, 189, 199–207, 223–33; see also periodicals; individual periodical titles popular fiction, 10 and the press, 158 radio/wireless, 11, 79, 137, 143

Mather, Frank Jewett, Jr., 231, 233

Mauron, Charles, 214, 220

Maxse, Kitty, 29, 30

Mayor, F(lora) M(acDonald), 183

Mays, Kelly, 37, 38

McAleer, Joseph, 3, 10

McAlmon, Robert, 121

McCarthy, Desmond, 66, 109

McDowall, Arthur S., 142, 173, 174

McFall, Gardner, 104

McGann, Jerome J., 192

McKay, Angus, 118

McKenzie, D(onald) F., 192

McLaughlin, Ann L., 104, 105

McNeillie, Andrew, 18, 30, 36, 38, 95, 141

McVicker, Jeanette, 8, 9, 13, 73–87, 161, 164, 193

Menand, Louis, 38

Mepham, John, 18, 38, 142, 233

Meyers, Jeffrey, 104

middlebrow, 15, 123, 137–49, 168, 169–77 see also “battle of the brows;” Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Middlebrow”

Miles, Eustace H., 28

Milton, John, 11, 103 “Lycidas,” 148

Mitchell, Margaret

Gone with the Wind, 192

Mitchison, Naomi, 174, 175

modernism, 1–3 passim, 7–10 passim, 12, 17, 75, 95, 98, 151, 157, 183–89 passim, 192, 200, 215, 226, 229–33 passim, 246, 249 and commerce, 2–3, 6, 12, 27–28, 37, 121–32 passim, 138–45 passim, 181–93 passim, 200, 239, 241 and commodification, 1, 2, 9, 11, 16, 18, 19, 139, 142, 185, 186, 243, 244

Index

Monet, Claude, 65–66, 69
Montaigne, Michel de, 139, 140
Moore, G(eorge) E., 64
Moore, George (novelist), 110
Moran, Patricia, 98, 104, 105
More, Paul Elmer, 224, 228, 233
Morley College, 30, 139
Morra, Umberto, 201, 202, 205, 210
Morrell, Ottoline, 96
Morrice, J(ames) W., 61
Morrison, Mark, 2, 3, 18, 154, 163
Mortimer, Raymond, 226–28
Mount, Ferdinand, 124
Mrs. Dalloway (film), 241, 251
Munich, Adrienne Auslander, 69
Munson, Gorham B., 226, 227, 233
Murray, Gilbert, 76
Murry, John Middleton, 91–92, 93, 95, 96, 101, 102, 103
Mussolini, Benito, 46, 68, 211, 212
Nathan, Rhoda B., 104
Nation and Athenaeum (N&A), 7, 12, 13, 43–54, 108, 141–42, 154–62, 163
National Review, 4, 29, 30, 141
Neaman, Judith S., 104
Neberker, Helen F., 101
Neverow, Vara, 8, 13, 57–71, 86
Nevin, Thomas R., 233
New Age, 44, 95, 97, 158, 163
The New Freewoman, 158
New Humanism, 17, 223–29, 231–33
New Republic, 142, 146, 154, 156–62
Peralta, Sergio, 204
Phillips, Kathy J., 191, 193
Plato, see Greek philosophy and drama
Plomer, William, 18, 19, 183, 184, 189, 193
Pollentier, Caroline, 15, 137–49
Porter, David H., 6, 18, 19
“positive nihilism,” 13–14, 75, 83–85
Pound, Ezra, 44, 121
Priestley, J(ohn) B., 137, 138, 140, 141, 143, 147, 177

Oldcastle, John, 28
Olesha, Yuri, 184
Onslow, Barbara, 28, 37
Orage, A(lfred) R., 44, 139
Osborne, Dorothy, 103, 105
Outka, Elizabeth, 9
Panfilo, 218–19
Paolini, Pier Francesco, 200
parresia, 75, 80–84
Partridge, Ralph, 6, 60
Pater, Walter, 29, 67, 68, 143, 145
Pavese, Cesare, 216
Pawlowski, Merry, 86
Pegaso, 210
Penguin (publishers), 17, 187, 238, 244–45, 246–47, 248, 250, 251
Perosa, Sergio, 204
professionalization, 1, 19, 30, 127, 137
see also Woolf, Virginia, literary professionalism; Works, “Professions for Women”
Proust, Marcel, 203–204, 230
Pykett, Lynn, 153, 163

Raboni, Giovanni, 210
Radin, Grace, 127, 129
Rainey, Lawrence, 2, 18, 147, 163
Rauchway, Eric, 159
Reid, Panthea, 61
religion, 13, 74, 79, 86
“Religious Belief Questionnaire” (N&E4), 13, 47–54
religious debate, 7, 13, 44–54
Rembrandt, 64, 65, 69
Renaud, Ralph E., 130–31
Rhondda, Lady (Margaret Haig Thomas), 170, 171, 177
Rhys, Ernest, 143
see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “The Modern Essay”
Rich, Adrienne, 109, 119
Richardson, Dorothy, 114
see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Romance and the Heart”
Richmond, Bruce, 32, 139
Robertson, J(ohn) M., 47, 49
see also Woolf, Leonard, Works, “Rationalism and Religion”
Rosati, Salvatore, 202, 203, 204, 219
Rosenbaum, S(tanford) P., 38, 185
Rundle, Christopher, 211
Russell, Percy, 28

Sackville-West, Vita, 86, 182, 183, 184, 185–86, 215, 219, 241
Saintsbury, George, 152
Sand, George, 173
Sanger, C(harles) P., 107
Sappho, 173
Sassoon, Philip, 124
Saturday Review, 138
Saxon-Turner, Sidney, 63

Sawaya, Francesca, 163
Scalero, Alessandra, 16–17, 199, 201–202, 207, 209, 210, 213–19
Scholes, Robert, 224
Schröder, Leena Kore, 123
Schuchard, Ronald, 225
Scott, Bonnie Kime, 172, 249
Serafini, Guglielmo, 202
Shakespeare, Judith, 102, 103, 118, 176, 242
Shakespeare, William, 91, 116, 117, 118
Shaw, George Bernard, 49
Shone, Richard, 60
Shorter, Clement, 111
Showalter, Elaine, 104, 109, 119
Silk, M(ichael) S. and J(oseph) P. Stern, 86
Silver, Brenda, R., 12, 19, 38, 84, 85, 169, 191, 192, 238, 239, 250, 251
Simpson, Kathryn, 1, 9, 18
Sinclair, May, 112
Sitwell, Edith, 121
Sitwell, Osbert, 121
Sluijter, Eric Jan, 65
Smith, Adrian, 54
Smith, Angela, 96, 104, 105
Smith, George Barnett, 111
Smith, Kenneth Alan, 38
Snaith, Anna, 8, 9, 18, 19, 37, 123–24, 131
Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 49
The Society of Authors, 28, 38
Solaria, 210
Sophocles, see Greek philosophy and drama
Spacks, Patricia Meyer, 93
Sparks, Elisa Kay, 233
Speaker, 30, 32
Spectator, 138, 156
Spender, Stephen, 7
Spiller, Robert E., 233
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 189
Squier, Susan Merrill, 57, 126, 132
Squire, J(ohn) C., 141, 143, 145
Staveley, Alice, 18, 19, 104, 163
Steed, Wickham, 172
Index

Stein, Gertrude, 14, 111, 121–22, 126, 130, 131–32
Steinbeck, John, 192, 211
Stephen, Adrian, 68
Stephen, Caroline, 9, 37, 193
Stephen, James, 38, 193
Stephen, Julia, 29
Stephen, Leslie, 29, 37, 38, 60, 65, 110, 140, 145, 228–29
Stephen, Thoby, 58, 60, 76
Stephen, Vanessa, *see* Bell, Vanessa
Stern, Alexandra Minna, 225
Strachey, Julia, 184
Strachey, Lytton, 58, 60, 64, 68, 125, 226–27
Strachey, Pippa, 68
Straight, Dorothy Whitney and Willard, 159
Sullivan, Melissa, 15, 163, 167–79, 220
Sutcliffe, W. Denham, 27
Sutherland, John A., 38
Svevo, Italo, 183, 184
Swanson, Diana, 86
Swinburne, Algernon, 67, 111
Swinnerton, Frank, 37
Symonds, John Addington, 67, 228

*T. P.’s Weekly*, 156
“tea-table training,” 13, 35, 57, 68
Thackeray, William Makepeace, 228
*Time*, 130
*Time and Tide*, 15, 167–78
*Times Literary Supplement (TLS)*, 4, 30, 32, 108, 139, 141, 142, 155, 156, 163, 185
Tintoretto, Jacobo, 65
Todd, Dorothy, 185
*see also Vogue*
Toklas, Alice B., 121, 131
Tomalin, Claire, 104
Hogarth Press, 6, 19, 184
Tratner, Michael, 9, 18, 86
Treglown, Jeremy and Bridget Bennett, 2
Trodd, Anthea, 3, 4, 18, 19, 172
Tuson, Michelle Elizabeth, 170, 171

Uchida, Yuzu, 17, 223–35
Underwood, Thomas A., 223

Valéry, Paul, 173
Van der Post, Laurens, 184, 189
Van Dyne, Dick, 209
Villa, Sara, 16–17, 200, 209–21
Villeneuve, Pierre-Éric, 203
Vittorini, Elio, 216, 218
*Vogue*, 4–5, 109, 112, 163, 185, 192, 232

Waller, Philip, 29, 38, 39
Ward, Mrs. Humphry (Mary Augusta), 31, 37
Warner, Sylvia Townsend, 176–77
Wassermann, Jakob, 214
West, Rebecca, 172
Westman, Karin, 163
Wexler, Joyce, 18
W. H. Smith, 50
Whitworth, Michael, 4, 7, 8, 9, 18, 19, 147, 193
Wicke, Jennifer, 9, 18, 187
Wilde, Oscar, 67
Williams, Orlo, 139
Willis, J(ohn) H., 5–6, 7, 11, 18, 19, 54, 183, 188, 189, 192
Willison, Ian, 18
Wilson, Edmund, 111, 157
Winchilsea, Lady (Ann Finch), 93
Winnifirth, Tom, 119
Winston, Janet, 104, 105
Woolf, Leonard, 4, 8, 101, 200
*as editor*, 7, 12, 13, 19, 43–54, 141, 157, 159, 163, 181
Woolf, Leonard—Continued
Jewishness, 122, 130, 131
as publisher, 5–7, 11–12, 82, 121, 182, 184, 185, 188, 192, 193, 204; see also Hogarth Press
on reviewing, 27, 37
Works
“Are Too Many Books Written and Published?,” 11
Beginning Again, 5
Downhill All the Way, 4, 5, 18, 19, 44, 45, 46, 54, 157
“Emily Brontë” (rev.), 108, 119
Empire and Commerce in Africa, 188
The Journey Not the Arrival Matters, 19
“Rationalism and Religion” (rev. of The Dynamics of Religion, The Religion of an Artist, and Essays on Religion), 46–53
Woolf, Virginia
on amateurism, 3, 8, 9, 34
apprenticeship as reviewer, 27–39
censorship, 7–8, 12, 13–14, 16–17, 35, 57–69, 75, 82–83, 199, 200, 207
as editor, 4, 182, 183, 184, 185, 190, 192
feminism, 3, 4, 12, 79, 82, 167, 168, 199, 242, 249, 251
on Jewishness, 14–15, 121–32, 211
libraries, 4, 92, 115, 152, 162, 175
literary journalism, 3–5, 10, 13, 27–28, 159
literary professionalism, 3–5, 7–11, 31–32, 36, 92, 102, 126, 127–29, 139, 142, 159, 182–84, 187, 190; see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “Professions for Women”
mass culture, 3, 9, 11, 12, 18, 137–49
popularity, 12, 124, 125–26, 130, 187–88
profits from writing and publishing, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14–15, 18, 31, 54, 95, 121–32, 141, 142, 159, 161, 167, 173, 175, 181, 182, 183, 189–92 passim
publishing, see Hogarth Press; see also Woolf, Leonard, as publisher
and the reader, see “common reader;” see also Woolf, Virginia, Works, “The Common Reader,” The Common Reader, The Common Reader, Second Series
reviewing, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, 19, 27–41, 43, 45, 104, 107, 110, 139, 141, 185
on university education, 10–11, 13, 28, 167, 174, 175, 176
Works
“Addison,” 140, 146–47, 148, 163
“Anon’ and ‘The Reader,’” 84, 85
“Are Too Many Books Written and Published?,” 11
“Beau Brummel,” 142
“A Belle of the Fifties” (rev.), 32, 33, 36
Between the Acts, 83, 84, 102, 152, 192, 204, 205, 206
“A Book of Essays” (rev. of If the Germans Conquered England), 139, 144
“Byron & Mr Briggs,” 92, 97
“Character in Fiction,” 114
“The Common Reader,” 9
The Common Reader, 14, 34, 92, 107, 113, 140–41, 152, 154, 155, 163, 181
The Common Reader, Second Series, 229
“The Decay of Essay-writing,” 1, 18, 139
“The Duchess and the Jeweller,” 15, 122–24
“The Feminine Note in Fiction” (rev.), 31 Flush, 15, 122–26, 130, 132, 200, 201, 210–11
“Geraldine and Jane,” 233
“Haworth, November, 1904,” 14, 29, 107, 110
“The House of Mirth” (rev.), 32–33, 34, 36
“How It Strikes a Contemporary,” 113, 117
“How Should One Read a Book?,” 34, 36, 151, 163
Hyde Park Gate News, 29
Index

“Indiscretions,” 109, 112–13
Jacob’s Room, 6, 10–11, 13, 57–69, 203, 205, 206, 216
“Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights,” 113, 114–15
“Kew Gardens,” 94, 95, 96, 104
“Leslie Stephen: The Philosopher at Home,” 228
“Literary Geography” (rev. of The Thackeray Country and The Dickens Country), 30
“The Lives of the Obscure,” 162, 163
“London Revisited” (rev.), 145–46
“The Mark on the Wall,” 7, 95, 104
“Middlebrow,” 9, 14, 137, 144, 148
“The Modern Essay,” 139, 140–41, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148
“Modern Fiction,” 231
Moments of Being, 13
“Mr Henry James’s Latest Novel” (rev. of The Golden Bowl), 30, 31–32, 33, 34, 36
Mrs. Dalloway, 17, 57, 67, 78, 102, 181, 186, 189, 200, 201, 202, 203, 205, 206, 207, 216, 238–46, 249–50, 251
Night and Day, 69, 126
“A Nineteenth-Century Critic” (rev. of Lectures and Essays), 32, 33, 34, 36–37
“On Being Ill,” 142
“On Not Knowing Greek,” 77–79
“On Re-reading Novels,” 112, 113
“The Patron and the Crocus,” 10, 145, 152, 154–61, 163
Pointz Hall, 187, 192
“Professions for Women,” 57, 68, 82, 126
“Report on Teaching at Morley College,” 30, 139
“Reviewing,” 1, 27, 30, 37, 141
“Robinson Crusoe,” 229–30
Roger Fry, 83, 204, 205, 206
“Romance and the Heart” (rev. of The Grand Tour and Revolving Lights), 114
“The Scholar’s Daughter” (rev.), 32, 34–35
“A Sketch of the Past,” 35, 57, 65, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 83, 84–85
“The Son of Royal Langbrith” (rev.), 31
“Street Haunting,” 142
“Three Characters,” 144
Three Guineas, 3, 11, 19, 68, 79–80, 82, 86, 94–95, 186, 204
“Thunder and Wembley,” 189
“To Spain,” 141–42
To the Lighthouse, 8, 67, 86, 181, 184, 186, 188, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204–206, 216, 220, 228
“22 Hyde Park Gate,” 65, 69
“Two Irish Novels” (rev. of Dan the Dollar and The Red-Haired Woman), 32, 34, 35–36, 37
The Voyage Out, 58, 94, 95, 104, 190, 206, 216, 227
The Waves, 17, 62, 69, 102, 125, 164, 182, 200, 201–202, 216, 238, 239, 245–51
“Waxworks at the Abbey,” 145, 146
“Women and Fiction,” 173, 192
The Years, 15, 79, 102, 122, 126–31, 186, 192
Woolmer, James Howard, 54
writing manuals, 13, 28–29
The Yale Review, 142
Young, John K., 16, 181–95