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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

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The Solid & the Shifting:

Darwinian Time, Evolutionary Form and the Greek Ideal
in the Early Works of Virginia Woolf

by

Joseph Kreutziger

A dissertation presented to
The Graduate School
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Joseph Kreutziger

Washington University in St. Louis
August 2017

In loving memory of Sam Stringfield
Slovesk Forever

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“The Solid & the Shifting”: Evolutionary Form, Darwinian Time, and the Greek Ideal in the
Early Works of Virginia Woolf

By
Joseph Kreutziger

Doctor of Philosophy in English and American Literature
Washington University in St. Louis, 2017
Professor Vincent Sherry, Chair

“Now is life very solid or very shifting?” Virginia Woolf asks in her diary of 1931, a question she claims haunts her in its contradictions. This dynamism between the solid and the shifting aspects of life and temporality is fundamental to an analysis of Woolf’s writing process. It resonates throughout the narratives of her experimental writings, culminating in her later works but clearly present in Woolf’s earliest pieces and forays as a writer. Behind it, I argue, are two of Woolf’s earliest academic pursuits and scholarly interests—natural history and Greek literature, especially as she came to read and understand them through the works of Darwin and Plato. That these two male university courses of study were denied her via any formal educational training compel her to think through the questions each field poses for the uses and advantages of a Modernist, feminist literature. This dissertation traces in Woolf the most significant cultural assumptions concerning Darwin’s evolutionary theory, and then later “the Greek ideal” as she came to inherit them through a male and female lineage of thinkers and associations. As my argument backtracks through Woolf’s childhood against the intellectual backdrop of some other major thinkers, of particular emphasis will be some of Woolf’s crucial early essays and short stories where she begins to work out at the level of plot and allusion much of the intellectual difficulties necessary to ground the radical departures in narrative form that would characterize her mature fiction. My analysis of how Woolf mediates this field of experience through her

earliest short stories, essays, novels, and the first experimental short stories—wherein Woolf tests many of the ideas derived from Darwin and Plato—establishes what might be described as an ontogeny and phylogeny of thought that prefigures the young Virginia Woolf’s ventures into a more radical narrative form. That is, Woolf’s individual development as a writer shares the temporal anxieties of many other figures we have subsequently categorized as Modernists, but with crucial distinguishing characteristics, not the least being her emphasis upon gender. Woolf’s dual engagement with her Victorian childhood and the Modernist present operates by exposing the very process of transformation: the solid and the shifting, the Greek ideal against the Darwinian, the masculine and the feminine, exist in dynamic temporal oppositions.

In order to establish these early formations of the Darwinian and Platonic aspects of her writing, I begin by exploring her first two novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Night & Day*, that establish Woolf’s engagement with evolutionary principles at the level of plot and character. Woolf’s major breakthrough in the writing of her short stories “Kew Gardens” and “The Mark on the Wall” also have Darwin as a principle origin, and when these two works are paired with Woolf’s radically experimental essay “Reading,” Woolf’s childhood fascination with entomology and “bugging” can be read as an essential formative experience that merges the personal and the literary. This play with evolutionary form and a Darwinian understanding of time and temporality is then juxtaposed alongside her abiding, profound appreciation of Hellenism and Greek literature. Woolf never fully abandons the Victorian inheritance of the “Greek ideal” as interpreted by Matthew Arnold and other Victorian luminaries. Complicating this understanding in ambivalent, contradictory ways is her personal association with Greek through her brother Thoby and all his Cambridge counterparts who become prominent figures of early Bloomsbury. The value Woolf derives from the Greek ideal never altogether disappears

from her work, and the struggle between the concepts of Darwinian process and temporality against Platonic stability and unity becomes the ruling dynamic of Woolf's method. They form the "solid and the shifting" aspects of Woolf's writing, a tension that her fiction engages in, embodies, and structurally represents.

*“Oh, he has his dissertation to write,” said Mrs. Ramsay. She knew all about **that**, said Mrs. Ramsay. He talked of nothing else. It was about the influence of somebody on something.*
—Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Chapter One: An Opening

Evolutionary Form and Darwinian Origins in Virginia Woolf

*1.1: THE SOLID AND THE SHIFTING

“Now is life very solid, or very shifting?” Virginia Woolf asks in her diary, at about the time she began work on what would become *The Waves* (1931):

I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on forever: will last forever; goes down to the bottom of the world—this moment I stand on. Also, it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change; one flying after another, so quick so quick, yet we are somehow successive, & continuous—we human beings; & show the light through. But what is the light? I am impressed by the transitoriness of human life to such an extent that I am often saying farewell—after dining with Roger for instance; or reckoning how many more times I shall see Nessa.¹

It is a characteristic progression of thoughts in Woolf. The verb “haunted” does not exaggerate how some of the most basic questions of time and temporality are central preoccupations in her writing. For though the subject here is ostensibly “life,” the responses are in relation to the temporal, as in the richly mixed metaphor of solidity figured as a “moment” she “stands on.” It (the present) “goes down to the bottom of the world” and will last an eternity, but this platform disintegrates with her ensuing metaphors of the moment as “transitory, flying, diaphanous.” If life is too short to be substantial, perhaps it can be interpreted as successive and collectively compensatory: the “I” becomes “we” and “we human beings...show the light through.” That

response only raises the question of what the light *is*; ontological speculation becomes epistemological. -As always in Woolf, the passage of time *is* a question of being, and conversely, the question of being a question of time. But the questions remain open-ended. Answers are put forth but immediately countered, the solid and the shifting unfolding rather than confirming a position.

This dynamism between the solid and the shifting aspects of life and temporality is fundamental to an analysis of Woolf's fiction. It represents a rhythm of thought that resonates throughout the narratives of her early and middle periods,² culminating in *The Waves*, but clearly present in Woolf's earliest writings. Ten years before she began work on *The Waves*, while writing her first experimental short stories and beginning *Jacob's Room*, Woolf formally and publicly asked the same questions about life and temporality, but she posed the contradiction itself as a formal consideration that novelists must address. Her essay "Modern Novels" (1919) is a manifesto for the kind of novel that would resist the idea that "life is like" the imminently solid structures created by her male "materialist" forebears, most notably H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennett.³ Even if Bennett "can make a book so well constructed and solid" that there is "not so much as a draught between the frames of the windows, or a crack in the boards," Woolf argues that life somehow escapes. All of this "enormous labor" of proving "solidity" is in fact "labour misplaced to the extent of obscuring and blotting out the light of the conception." The "moment of importance" must include the ordinary mind on an ordinary day as it receives "an incessant shower of innumerable atoms," some of them "evanescent," some

¹ January 4, 1929, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III*, (1924-1930), ed. by Anne Olivier Bell, assisted by Andrew McNeillie (New York: HBJ, 1980) 218.

² In breaking Woolf's writing career into three periods, I follow Carolyn Heilbrun and Molly Hite, but perhaps with different emphasis upon the periods. The first period ranges from 1906-1917, which includes her earliest short stories up through the writing of *Night and Day*. The middle period begins in 1917, with the writing of her first experimental short stories, *Kew Gardens* and *Mark on the Wall*, and concludes with *The Waves* in 1931. The last period stretches from 1932-41, when Woolf, in Heilbrun's estimation, began to deal more explicitly and directly with the social status of women, "to cross her self-drawn line between art and propaganda."

“engraved with the sharpness of steel” and “composing in their sum what we might venture to call life itself.”⁴ Woolf’s thesis, which would later become a central tenet of Modernist fiction, is grounded on the assertion that, given the shifting and the solid (the evanescent and the engraved), the novelist’s task is to “trace this pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incidence scores upon the consciousness.” It follows one of the most quoted passages in Woolf’s critical writings, here taken from the more familiar revision of “Modern Novels” into “Modern Fiction,” which was included in *The Common Reader* (1925): “Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.”⁵

A subtle shift occurs here. The mind *receives impressions* from the external world, some engraved and some evanescent. Woolf’s diary inquiry— “But what is the light?”—is a central concern of this essay as well. For the novelist, the question is addressed by how the novel is *lit*. Woolf argues that the “light of the conception” is obscured or transformed by experiencing life as something contrived, or staged, the materialists and their gig lamps symmetrically arranged. Instead, the modern novelist begins from within; *life is the light* that emanates outward and envelops *the living* in a diaphanous halo. Do we “show the light through,” as Woolf’s diary entry phrases it, or does life surround us, as “Modern Fiction” has it? The distinction, if there is one, remains an inquiry central to experiencing her fiction, as does her location of self and meaning, life and light. In “Modern Fiction,” Woolf adds that the novelist must convey this “uncircumscribed spirit,” picking up the figure of the envelope as “semi-transparent” rather than wholly transparent, a crucial difference.⁶ Character should never be fully circumscribed or fully irradiated by authorial omniscience. The author instead traces what moves, consciousness, lit

³ *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 3: (1919-1924)*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (HBJ: 1988) 33.

⁴ *The Common Reader: First Series*, edited and introduced by Andrew McNeillie, (New York: HBJ, 1984) 32-33.

from within and through this temporal procession, this vague nebulosity, “from the beginning of consciousness to the end.” When Woolf asks the writer to “look within” rather than without (opposing the external constructs of the materialists), she insists that her idea of a new narrative form would retain this incessant procession of consciousness, a process unavailable to the conventional construction of “our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds.”

Put simply, the question of time becomes a question of narrative form for Virginia Woolf. The vantage point from which the narrator perceives her characters then becomes not just the configuration of plot and setting. This directly relates to the basic spatial and temporal issues of where and when a story takes place, but Woolf’s emphasis is on the mediation of narrative. Gone in Woolf is not only omniscience, in the traditional sense, but the aerial perspective, the temporal distance from which a beginning, middle, and end may assure and be assured for the reader. The narrative chronology of A to B to C might begin within the contours of B, Woolf suggests, and perhaps not even conclude with a C: “if one were free and could set down what one chose, there would be no plot, little probability, and a vague general confusion in which the clear-cut features of the tragic, the comic, the passionate, and the lyrical were dissolved beyond the possibility of separate recognition.”⁷ Nothing is certain, above all the conventions that direct how a story will begin, develop and end. In “Modern Fiction,” Woolf refers in particular to a short piece of Chekhov that remains “vague and inconclusive” by story’s end, suggesting that this may be the right course, because “there is perhaps no answer to the questions which it raises.”⁸

⁵ *Ibid.* 150.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ “Modern Novels,” 33.

⁸ “Modern Novels,” *Essays of Virginia Woolf Vol. 3*, 35; “Modern Fiction,” *Common Reader*, 153.

This is reminiscent of Henry James's reference to the "arena" of action, the perspective "in the midst," the present moment. In her essays, Woolf ceaselessly examines how the narrative perspective presented within the novel is ineluctably interwoven with the author's historical perspective. The modern position, Woolf stipulates, is conditioned by an unsettled belief in the past and the lack of assurance in a future: "We are sharply cut off from our predecessors," writes Woolf. "A shift in the scale—the sudden slip of masses held in position for ages—has shaken the fabric from top to bottom, alienated us from the past and made us perhaps too vividly conscious of the present."⁹ The relations between past and future are formative. In "How It Strikes a Contemporary," Woolf looks back at Austen, Wordsworth, and Scott's ease in creating "that complete statement which is literature," an ability that she posits as possible because of "the power of their belief," what she goes on to construe as the more solid "relations of human beings towards each other and towards the universe."¹⁰ But did human character actually change on or about December, 1910, as Woolf famously declared? Or was it her perception of forms in the arts and power relations in society that allowed for a new vision of such character?¹¹ The times and our relationship to the temporal had changed, she insisted, and so should the form of the novel and the methods of the novelists. The author who most strives to represent the multiform shapes and the incessant temporal shifts consciousness takes moment to moment on any given day would best represent modern human character. These "solid" and "shifting" perspectives are essential strategies of Woolf's own narrative form. From the earliest

⁹ "How it Strikes a Contemporary" (1923), *Common Reader*, 236.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 238-9.

¹¹ I refer of course to Woolf's essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," and the line "On or about December 1910, human character changed." The tone in Woolf is jocular and the assigning of the date obscure. But her dating, I believe, is cumulative, based on multiple events in 1910: the Post-Impressionist exhibit put together by Roger Fry, the ascension of George V, the death of Florence Nightingale, the Conciliatory Bill put before Parliament for the enfranchisement of women, and the elections of December 1910 that gave Asquith's Liberal Party the power to create the January 1911 Parliamentary Act that could severely curtail the power of the House of Lords.

short stories to *Between the Acts* and the uncompleted memoir “A Sketch of the Past,” there are moments of stability set in conflict and scattered by the passage of time.

✱1.2: BACKGROUND

Such a general summation, naturally, draws a circle of inclusion around at least two generations of notable writers who find the question of time a particularly modern dilemma. In addition to Virginia Woolf’s refinement of this tendency in her thought and work—what she succinctly describes as “moments of being” in her posthumously published memoir—there are a host of other phrases inaugurated to mediate the temporal difficulties of Modernity: Friedrich Nietzsche’s “eternal return,” William James’s “stream of consciousness,” Henri Bergson’s “real duration,” Edmund Husserl’s “internal time-consciousness,” Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad’s separate “moments of vision,” Joyce’s “epiphany,” Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis’s “Vortex,” T. S. Eliot’s “still point,” Heidegger’s “Dasein,” among others. These comprise only a handful of the most pronounced variations upon a theme. Rescuing the moment *from time* becomes the substance of philosophical and literary works that ubiquitously announce a modern sensibility, often perplexed by an increasingly troubled, but nuanced, vision of temporality.

But why? While the philosophical questions of time and temporality are as ancient as philosophy itself, certainly present in Greek pre-Socratic philosophers like Thales and Heraclitus, these specific questions, explorations and preoccupations define Modernity to such an extent that they create a fault-line between Modern and Victorian sensibilities. A seminal essay like T.E. Hulme’s “Romanticism and Classicism”(1912) must address the contemporary anxiety over time to prophecy a new kind of Classicism for the twentieth century that would be

antithetical to the lingering nineteenth century Romanticism.¹² Wyndham Lewis, the staunchest polemicist *against* what he viewed as the “time-cult” of his era, nevertheless identified the time obsession of his contemporaries as the prevailing, predominant *zeitgeist* that he needed to expose if only to contradict and conquer.¹³ Indeed, the basic notions of time and space are scrutinized and revised so thoroughly that Stephen Kern is not being hyperbolic when he defines a major subtext of Modernism’s intellectual milieu as *The Culture of Time and Space*.¹⁴ Kern’s seminal work revisits the years 1880-1918, which allows him to convey the broad range of interests and anxieties conceptions of time elicited and emerging technology altered. There was the Prime Meridian Conference of 1884 that proposed the global standardization of uniform time and almost thirty years later the proposal was put into practice when the first time signal was transmitted around the world in the summer of 1913. Never before had time become so uniformly public.¹⁵ This “mean time” coincides with the newfound need to “regulate” time, from the precise measurements necessary to administer modern railroads and modern warfare to the capitalistic demand for efficiency in the factory so exacting, that time indeed became money. Randall Stevenson’s thorough-going analysis of “temporal autonomy” in *Modernist Fiction* deftly elucidates the consequences of the new perception of time in political and economic terms, even down to the gold standard of business: reduced to the dutiful, superannuated laborer’s reception of a gold watch upon retirement, a paltry symbol indeed of human reification through time.¹⁶ Electricity lighting the night and then coursing through telegraphs and telephones instantaneously altered mental associations of time and distance. Chronophotography and

¹² In Hulme. *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*. ed. Herbert Read. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1936) 113-40.

¹³ This position is evident throughout Lewis’s entire oeuvre, but the position is most explicitly laid out in *Time and Western Man* (1927).

¹⁴ *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, (Harvard UP, 1983).

¹⁵ See Kern’s *The Culture of Time and Space*, Ch. 1: “The Nature of Time”.

¹⁶ See Stevenson’s chapter “Time” in *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*, (University of Kentucky Press, 1992), specifically 113-153.

cinematography, the still series put in motion with greater and greater precision and speed, inspired new metaphors (indeed new theories) for the temporal, and consequently for fictional techniques.¹⁷ Then the invention of electric clocks in 1916 simulated for the first time since the sun-dial the flux of time, rather than the interval of the ‘tick-tock’. The atomized nature of time, in praxis since the introduction of mechanized clocks, all of a sudden let time be conceived in terms of electric currents.

In the meantime, the new physics brought about a stellar revolution. Minkowski’s Space-Time Continuum (1905) and Einstein’s Special and General Theories of Relativity (1905-1907) ruptured the universalism of Newton’s theories on absolute space and time. If time is relative to the motion between an observer and the thing observed, a “plurality of local times” replaces the fixed measurements of Newton’s theories.¹⁸ The stability of all spatial forms is then modified by the accelerating rate of gravitational force, with the size and shape of any body susceptible to change. Minkowski’s bold address delivered at the *80th Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians* famously announces a new reality to discern:

The views of space and time that I wish to lay before you have sprung from the soil of experimental physics, and therein lies their strength. They are radical. Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.¹⁹

The fourth dimension was that new reality. The Classic distinctions that separated space from time, solidified for the arts in the eighteenth century by Gotthold Lessing’s clear delineation of

¹⁷ Kern, “The Nature of Time.” Henri Bergson’s famous metaphor of the intellect’s apprehension of time as approximate to the cinematograph occurs first in *Creative Evolution*, 1910.

¹⁸ Ibid. 15-19.

¹⁹ September 21, 1908

the plastic arts as space-bound and the narrative arts as time-bound in form, were blurred and challenged.²⁰

Fiction, the narrative art seemingly most time-bound in its conventions, begins to register this temporal plurality in its very structure. Paul Ricoeur chooses three Modern novels, including Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, as the analytical testing grounds for his theoretical application of narrative reconciliations to the aporias of time. If the novel genre is "an immense laboratory for experiments in which...every received convention has been set aside," the modern novel, in particular, questions the very nature of narrative constructions by the authors' "awareness of every artifice" that binds time to narrative.²¹ Much has been made of Modernism as a time of social upheaval and instability, but a major contribution to the interpretation of fictional technique was the newfound instability of *time itself*. By 1908, the British philosophers F. H. Bradley and J. M. McTaggart had gone as far as to come to the conclusions that time was unreal, which instigated an ardent debate that included, among others, the Cambridge philosophers G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, with whom Woolf was well-acquainted.²² Wyndham Lewis's account of his era's time-obsession in *Time and Western Man* (1927) is in a large sense "unexceptionable," Frederic Jameson argues, "because contemporary consciousness...also modern art and the modern sensibility in all its manifestations, are saturated

²⁰ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon, An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*. trans. Edward Allen McCormick. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962). See also Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," reprinted in *The Widening Gyre; Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature*, (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963) for his discussion of Lessing's influence on viewing the arts spatially or temporally in criticism, particularly its influence on the pictorial arts.

²¹ *Time and Narrative, Vol. 2*, trans. By Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 8-9.

²² Woolf knew both Moore and Russell personally through the Cambridge group introduced to her by her brother Thoby. Their influence was significant on Woolf and all early Bloomsbury writers. Ann Banfield discusses the content of this debate and its relation to Woolf thoroughly in her book *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000) as well as in other essays, including "Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse*," *Modernism/Modernity* 7.1 (2000) 43-75. Some issues raised by Banfield will be discussed in the ensuing chapters.

by an original and historically new sense of temporality.”²³ Virginia Woolf, like many of her contemporaries, was haunted by the contradictions between the solid and the shifting. It was a part of the social and intellectual atmosphere of the early twentieth century.

✱1.3: THE TEMPORAL BARRIER

What distinguishes Woolf is not simply that she was aware of the new aporias of time, or even that she and Marcel Proust were the writers of the era most preoccupied with them. The new temporalities introduced by modern physics and technology are evident in Woolf, but what seems to me altogether more significant, is an older and more profound preoccupation with time. It is Victorian, as is Woolf’s childhood, and it is an inherited dilemma so momentous that Paul Ricoeur describes it as the breaking of the “temporal barrier.”²⁴ When the great revolutions in the sciences of the nineteenth century—culminating in Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory—subjected the earth and all its inhabitants to a natural history, it imposed “a progressive extension of the scale of time beyond the barrier of six thousand years, assigned by a petrified Judeo-Christian tradition.”²⁵ Perception of the earth’s age shifted from thousands to many millions of years, and so the history of humanity shrank to what Kern, via Joyce, describes as “a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity.”²⁶ This parenthesis, I will argue, haunts Woolf. It most famously brackets the human time of the Ramsays in the “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse*, but it also brackets, in some manner, all of her characters. Woolf’s narrator in “The Mark on the Wall” muses that if life is to be compared to anything, “one must liken it to being blown through

²³ Qtd. in Randall Stevenson’s *Modernist Fiction* (112) from Frederic Jameson’s *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (London: University of California Press, 1979) 123-124.

²⁴ *Time and Narrative, Vol. 3*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 89-90.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Culture of Time and Space*, 38. Kern borrows the phrase from Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

the Tube at fifty miles an hour.”²⁷ The time of living might approximate the railway time of modernity, but the speed of technological innovation evokes in Woolf’s fiction the vast stretch of evolutionary time. Outside of this parenthetical brevity—“one flying after another, so quick, so quick”—is Darwin’s imposition of an expanse of time and change upon human life, in fact, upon all life. With the remorselessness of such a process, the instant becomes increasingly existential, the moment a metonym for life.

It raises an even greater difficulty that Woolf does not shy away from. If evolution is a given, and understood without temporal misprisions, the moment is not metaphysical. That is, the moments Woolf seizes upon *seem* as if they will last an eternity, but that delusion is subverted by the mutability of humanity through a finite time and a transitory existence. Darwin muses in *The Origin of Species* that the thought of evolution impresses his mind almost “as does the vain endeavour to grapple with the idea of eternity,”²⁸ but it is an eternity without the consolation of eternal forms: the ascent uncertain and accidental, the descent long and disappearing. Darwin’s famous quotation from his notebooks, “He who understands the baboon would do more towards metaphysics than Locke,”²⁹ carries in its bravado the strong assertion that the metaphysics in the future need to be grounded in a natural history, not supernatural belief. A Darwinian perspective temporalizes, and the question of eternity is not merely vain endeavor—eternity becomes a metaphor, a mathematical abstraction, a temporal question treated *as if* it were eternal, as it were.

Darwin, in other words, creates of the moment a super-transitory state. Gillian Beer notes that even such thoroughgoing evolutionary writers as Freud, Marx, and Thomas Huxley misinterpret Darwin’s theory for a culmination of the present moment: “It is a theory which does

²⁷ Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf, Second Edition, ed. by Susan Dick (New York: HBJ, 1985) 84

²⁸ *The Origin of Species*, Ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Gillian Beer (New York: Oxford UP, 1998) 231.

not privilege the present, which sees it as a moving instant in an endless process of change. Yet it has persistently been recast to make it seem that all the past has been yearning towards the present moment and is satisfied now.”³⁰ As much as the feeling of permanence is there in Woolf, she does not gather her characters or their moments up into an artifice of eternity. There are multiple momentary stays, but those moments pass and are laid to account through Darwin’s long perspective of a natural history. Mrs. Ramsay’s dinner party in *To the Lighthouse* “partook, she felt...of eternity....Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures.”³¹ Yet Woolf’s narrative carefully qualifies such moments of transcendence—the feeling and thought here are only Mrs. Ramsay’s, and even she later recognizes their impermanence. The moment that was an eternity “had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past.”³² The present is precarious in Woolf, an effect she achieves even through the narrative grammar that locates the present in the past. “We can’t all be Titians, we can’t all be Darwins,” the botanist William Bankes tells the amateur artist Lily Briscoe, a commentary not only of genius, but on what endures.³³ Mr. Ramsay’s own melancholic reflections on time have him measuring the endurance of his philosophical work. Fame of this sort “lasts perhaps two thousand years. And what are two thousand years?...The very stone one kicks with one’s boot will outlast Shakespeare.”³⁴ Woolf borrows Darwin’s vision of time, and it is from this vantage that she measures the scale of human existence and endurance in her narratives.

The first premise of my thesis, then, is that the major influence behind Virginia Woolf’s temporal experimentations in her narratives, a process that is there from the very beginning, is

²⁹ *M Notebook* (1838), #84

³⁰ *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000) 10. Her emphasis.

³¹ (New York: HBJ, 1981) 105.

³² *Ibid.* 111.

³³ *Ibid.* 72.

³⁴ *To the Lighthouse*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1927), p. 35.

Darwinian. Taken baldly as a statement, this does not seem a position that merits further exploration. Not everyone will agree with Daniel Dennett in proclaiming that Darwin's theory of evolution was "the best idea anyone has ever had," and that "in a single stroke, the idea of evolution by natural selection unifies the realm of life, meaning, and purpose with the realm of space and time, cause and effect, mechanism and physical law."³⁵ But it is an idea that impacted all of the arts and sciences so thoroughly, that it is worthwhile to examine how it developed in the writing of one of the most preeminent writers of the Modernist literary movement.

Moreover, what I will explore here is how that affinity to Darwin is more direct, more immediate, more conscious and significant than simply the Darwinian air that all writers of modernity breathed. Where other writers sought an answer or compensation to evolution, Woolf finds a possibility, even a metaphor for life and writing through which she establishes a methodology for her narrative technique. Her most Darwinian novel is also her first, *The Voyage Out* (1915), and her early experimental short stories have evolutionary roots as well, with Darwinian imagery deeply rooted in the narrative, early signs of Woolf's future narrative direction. The technique evolves from novel to novel, but Woolf's abiding methodology in some shape or form remains Darwinian. Woolf's redress of conventional narrative primarily struggles against the unity of time and identity represented by the Victorian resistance to Darwin's notion of change through time. Inherent in that Victorian unity were the aspects of time and identity she found repressive, sexist, stagnant, patriarchal, and domineering. Outwardly, Darwin may have fit the stereotype of the eminent Victorian that Woolf's friend Lytton Strachey satirizes, but the formative years that occupy both the beginning of Woolf's fictional career and the Great European war afford her a deeper insight into the literary possibilities of evolutionary theory.

³⁵ *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995) 21.

Woolf shares Darwin's long perspective, and it mediates the aspects of time and identity that she attempts to register in the experimental structures of her work.

*1.4: THE MYTH OF PROGRESS, THE MISS OF PROCESS

Woolf's cultivation of both evolutionary principles and a Darwinian temporality are also at the root of her feminism. This second premise might at first seem antithetical, since much of Woolf's social, political, and feminist criticism argues against the many varieties of social Darwinism that reared their ugly, imperialistic heads. Elizabeth G. Lambert alludes to this from an excised line in Woolf's *Melymbrosia*, the working title of *The Voyage Out*, where Rachel Vinrace thinks despondently, "Women too, she remembered, are more common than men; and Darwin says they are nearer the cow."³⁶ What is telling, in one respect, is that Darwin does not say this; it is a misrepresentation that the impressionable and naïve Rachel believes after hearing it. Such sentiments were common enough and well disseminated. What is telling is that Rachel *feels* this to be true precisely when she meets Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf's exemplars of a self-assured, egotistical, superficial, patriarchal power couple. While Lambert does acknowledge that Darwin provided Woolf an "imaginative creativity that delights in variety," she reads the evolutionary discourse in Woolf as primarily a parody of or an invective against social Darwinism and misogyny, characterized by Woolf's doctors, priests, and professors who "advocate Social Darwinism to exclude women and the 'unfit' from positions of power, while equating masculinity with militaristic nationalism."³⁷

Key to my argument is the separation of Darwin's writing, which inspired Woolf's early aesthetic, primarily *The Voyage of the Beagle* and *Origin of Species*, from the misconceptions of

³⁶ "And Darwin Says They Are Nearer the Cow": Evolutionary Discourse in *Melymbrosia* and *The Voyage Out*," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 37, Issue 1 (Spring, 1991) 1-21, p. 1.

Social Darwinism that through misinterpretation foresee a direction of evolutionary principles and proffer a Darwinian basis for slavery, colonialism, eugenics, totalitarianism, and just about every other abuse of power and position anathema to Woolf's feminism and pacifism. Though Darwin does take the phrase "survival of the fittest" (perhaps unfortunately) from Spencer, he thankfully does not take Spencer's methodology or leaps of deduction into a sociology that has more to do with the rise of Social Darwinism and Eugenics than anything Darwin ever advocated.³⁸ *A Room of One's Own* caricatures characters such as Professor von X, the men who write scholarly articles on the colonized races or the "Mental, Moral, and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex." These characters do employ Darwinian discourse, but it is a misrepresentation of Darwin, who after all was an abolitionist and anti-imperialist.³⁹ Lambert writes that Darwin's *Origin and Descent* "encourage the belief that European men are the apex of evolution,"⁴⁰ but he does so in the same manner that some might argue Einstein's theories encourage the creation and proliferation of nuclear weapons and moral relativism, or that the Wright brothers were responsible for the building of bombers. It is mostly ignorant of what at most should only be perceived a consequence. Darwin, of course, is in one sense a typical Victorian patriarch whose writing contains vestiges of common cultural assumptions, but he transgresses and dismantles many of those cultural assumptions through his research and writing. Both Gillian Beer and George Levine have well established how Darwin the Victorian is both a precursor and a major

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 21.

³⁸ Spencer's influence on Social Darwinism will be discussed in Part II.

³⁹ *A Room of One's Own* (New York: HBJ, 1981) 31. See, Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin Voyaging* (New Jersey: Princeton UP) 191-210. One anecdote in particular is illustrative: It has been argued that the voyage of the *HMS Beagle* transformed Darwin from a gifted observer and collector of nature into an analytical thinker of theoretical brilliance, but it almost ended for Darwin well before he landed upon evolutionary theory. When the young Darwin refused to agree with Captain Fitzroy that slaves seen in Brazil were well-treated and happy, Fitzroy went into a tirade so ugly that only a consequent apology prevented Darwin from abandoning ship. Browne's biography navigates exceptionally well between Darwin's Victorian cultural assumptions as a land-owning gentleman and his extreme revulsion of slavery and the undercurrents of empire-building.

⁴⁰ Darwin himself, it is well documented, was deeply troubled by some of the social and political implications possible from his theory by means of natural selection.

progenitor of Modernism.⁴¹ Lambert is more astute when dealing with Darwin when she distinguishes the sexual ambiguities in his writing from the evolutionary discourse that Woolf appropriates “to criticize the narrow empiricism of sexual science while expressing expanses of time and space and the complexity of relations particularly evident in Darwin’s writing.”⁴²

Against the misconceptions that are Social Darwinism, Woolf develops a narrative technique that finds in the procession of evolution the missing narrative link that breaks the chain of progression. It undoes the structural scaffolding of patriarchal literature, at least as she envisions it, the rigidly structured forms of “materialist” writing. Some of the feminist, postmodernist, and even post-colonial readings of Woolf should be read in relation to this origin. Critics such as Julia Kristeva, Jane Marcus, Pamela Caughie, and Bonnie Kime Scott all argue that Woolf values process over conclusion, openings over enclosures, oscillation and permeability over the fixed and static, webs and lateral movements over linear and logical forms of most conventional patriarchal writing.⁴³ It is essential to understanding her feminist aesthetic and her narrative technique, and it is evident in many ways that Woolf inherited the idea for this process from Darwin. Gillian Beer observes, “Because of its preoccupation with time and with change, evolutionary theory has inherent affinities with the problems and processes of narrative.”⁴⁴ Those affinities are not only inherent but also selected by Woolf. Linking her narrative process to Darwinian principles, in fact, can shed light on its kinship to many post-modern and feminist readings, and why Woolf’s writing has not only adapted and survived, but

⁴¹ See Beer’s introduction to *The Origin of Species* as well as *Darwin’s Plots*, both cited above. See also George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1988).

⁴² Lambert, *Twentieth Century Literature*, p. 3.

⁴³ For example Julia Kristeva’s *Revolution in Poetic Language*, translated by Margaret Waller, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984; Pamela Caughie’s “Introduction” to *Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2000); Jane Marcus’s *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987); and Bonnie Kime Scott’s *Refiguring Modernism*. Vols. 1-2 (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995)

⁴⁴ *Darwin’s Plots*, 5.

positively thrived through the sea changes of critical thinking, when many of her male contemporaries have waned in prominence.

For Woolf, the Great War of 1914 forever disturbed the evolutionary myth of progress from primitive man to *Homo Britainicus*, which Herbert Spencer and other positivists thought inevitable. It disrupted the idea of a determined future and provided the possibility of a new future for women both personally and politically. Woolf divorces the thought of evolution from the attempts to make it a justification for power through superiority. Because the theory of evolution was so quickly appropriated by the philosophies of progress and will, so quickly used to justify the politics of colonialism and empire, it took Woolf some time to achieve this distinction between a narrative process inspired by Darwin and a vigorous rebuttal of all genus and species of Social Darwinism.

*1.5: THE CRITICISM

The temporality of Woolf's writing and its relation to her feminism have been explored often. Early studies of Woolf's aesthetics frequently concentrate on either the "solid" or the "shifting" aspects of Woolf's writing. I have already mentioned Wyndham Lewis's *Time and Western Man* (1927), but his chapter on Virginia Woolf in *Men without Art* (1934) specifically and characteristically attacks Woolf for (among other things) her "Bergsonism," a catchword in Lewis for all things malevolent as a consequence of Henri Bergson's influence upon the time consciousness of modern thought. Bergson is Lewis's devil, but Lewis imagines many archfiends and subordinates in Bergson's sphere of malevolence. Lewis's work anticipates Joseph Frank's essay "The Idea of Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945), which introduces the broken temporal sequence of Modern literature as a "spatialization" of time and memory.

Frank's essay made commonplace the critical paradigms of spatial or temporal readings for Modernist literature. The most forceful response to spatial form is from Frank Kermode, whose seminal work *The Sense of an Ending* (1965) finds too much myth-making and even ties to fascism (including Wyndham Lewis's) in a 'spatial' concept of literature. Instead of "Bergsonian attitudes" or democracy, "there is to be order as the modernist artist understands it: rigid, out of flux, the spatial order of the modern critic or the closed authoritarian society."⁴⁵ This position reinforces Shiv Kumar's *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (1962), which goes as far as to claim that "Life, as Virginia Woolf conceives it, ...has no spatial symmetry or cohesion about it," since its determining aspect is Henri Bergson's "*la durée*."⁴⁶ But opposing Kumar's influential reading are many critics, including Tony Inglis, who argues that "Woolf's novels are better read as weapons against flux than as inert surrenders to it."⁴⁷ Ann Banfield comes to a similar conclusion from a wholly different school of philosophical thought in her study of the temporal aspects of Woolf's fiction influenced by Cambridge philosophy hostile to Bergson's sense of time.⁴⁸

Though these studies tend to situate Woolf in either the spatial or the temporal camp, there is the larger body of criticism begun in the 1970s that perceives in Woolf a dualism at work, particularly the feminist criticism that invokes Woolf's famous use of Coleridge's "androgynous mind" as a synthesis of the male and female intellect.⁴⁹ Molly Hite's more recent

⁴⁵ Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," reprinted in *The Widening Gyre; Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature*, (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963); Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending; Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2000). Also see Hugh Kenner's chapter "Space-Craft" in *The Pound Era*, which examines the spatialization of Modern literature, especially Flaubert, Pound, Eliot, Lewis, and Joyce. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971) 23-40.

⁴⁶ (London: Blackie, 1962) 69

⁴⁷ "Virginia Woolf and English Culture" (Paris, 1977), first English version in *Virginia Woolf*, ed. Rachel Bowlby (London: Longman, 1992) 48.

⁴⁸ "Tragic time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and to the Lighthouse," *Modernism/Modernity* 7.1 (2000) 43-75.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Carolyn Heilbrun, *Towards Androgyny: Aspects of Male and Female in Literature* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1973); Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1973); Elaine

exploration of the “visionary” and the “physical bodies” of Woolf’s characters most convincingly answers the studies that have criticized the perceived “disembodied” feminism of Woolf’s writing, while bridging Woolf’s dual “affinities between her feminist and modernist projects.”⁵⁰ Studies concentrating on the influence of visual aesthetics on Woolf, particularly by Roger Fry and her sister Vanessa Bell, have also followed Allen McLaurin in attempting to bridge the spatial concepts of painting with the temporal framework of Woolf’s novels.⁵¹ In doing so, these studies have been ideologically tied to Woolf’s feminism and the correlating aspects of her pacifism.

There is a tendency to dismiss the discourse of science or male philosophers in light of Woolf’s invective against “materialist” fiction and the sterile products of patriarchal culture, but the exceptions are notable and significant.⁵² Harvena Richter’s *The Inward Voyage* (1970) is the first in a series of studies on the philosophical and scientific importance of Woolf’s fiction, including Hussey’s *The Singing of the Real World* (1986), Lucio Ruotolo’s *The Interrupted Moment* (1988), and Gillian Beer’s influential essays on Woolf collected in *The Common Ground* (1996), to which I am particularly indebted for their insights into many of Woolf’s philosophical and scientific interests, including Charles Darwin, reviewed in a manner that does not curtail the importance of Woolf’s feminism or her use of Darwin in developing her

Showalter, ‘Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny,’ *A Literature of Their Own*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977); Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985).

⁵⁰ Molly Hite, “Virginia Woolf’s Two Bodies,” *Genders* 31 (2000), 27 August 2006.

⁵¹ McLaurin, *Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved* (New York: CUP, 1973). See also David Dowling’s *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf*, (London: Macmillan, 1985); Mariana Torgovnick, *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence and Woolf*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), Jane Goldman, *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse, The Waves* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998) and *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1998).

⁵² Ann Banfield’s essay (see above), Holly Henry, *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Mark Hussey, *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf’s Fiction*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986).; Harvena Richter, *The Inward Voyage* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970); and the most exhaustive study of Plato in Woolf, Brenda Lyons, *Textual Voyages: Platonic Allusions in Virginia Woolf’s Fiction*, Thesis, Balliol College, University of Oxford, Trinity, 1995.

aesthetics.⁵³ Paul Ricoeur's monumental three-volume study of *Time and Narrative* offers a critical analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway*, elucidating and explicating his thesis on the aporias of time in fiction and history; Ricoeur's sense of a dialectic at work between a "cosmic" and "lived" time helps us shed light on the techniques in Woolf's writing that create a plurality of times her narrators mediate and her characters inhabit.⁵⁴ More recently, Ann Banfield has written an exhaustive, meticulous account of Woolf's relationship to both the aesthetics of Roger Fry and the Cambridge philosophers who together form, in her view, a significant share of the epistemology of Modernism.⁵⁵

The strength of these studies has also dramatically altered the pre-1970s version of Virginia Woolf, ushered in by Q. D. Leavis and others, as an ivory tower aesthete, easily dismissed next to her virile male contemporaries as a fashionable writer of quaint interests. They have given large corroboration to Mark Hussey's critical insistence in regard to Woolf—that her ethics, politics, and aesthetics are all interlinked.⁵⁶ Indeed, what Hugh Kenner once described pejoratively as Woolf's "domesticated modernism" now can be revisited as a virtue when compared to the aesthetic creeds of some of her male contemporaries who followed their masculine dogmas right into authoritarian or fascist ideologies.⁵⁷ Bonnie Kime Scott in particular redefines the image of Woolf as an effete aesthete by distinguishing her from the aesthetics of the "men of 1914," namely Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and the rest

⁵³ *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), especially the essay "Virginia Woolf and Prehistory," p. 6-29. Beer's landmark work, *Darwin's Plots* (1983), incidentally, is the essential study of evolutionary narrative in nineteenth century fiction, without which this thesis would have been substantially diminished.

⁵⁴ *Time and Narrative, Vol. 1-3*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; 1984; 1988)

⁵⁵ *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000)

⁵⁶ Introduction, *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, ed. by Mark Hussey (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1991).

⁵⁷ Heilbrun, Carolyn. "Plenary Session: Carolyn Heilbrun interviewed by Smith College Provost Susan C. Bourque" The Thirteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf: "Woolf in the Real World," 6 June 2003, Wright Hall Auditorium, Smith College.

of the “masculinists”⁵⁸ associated with BLAST. Lewis’s broadside attacks on Virginia Woolf are often in association with his abhorrence of the Bergsonian concept of time and the internalized, feminine gush that permeates her novels; there is also the caricature of Woolf as the prudish, snobby feminist Rhoda Hymen in *The Roaring Queen* (1936). While some of this must be read in light of Lewis’s hatred of Roger Fry and all things Bloomsbury, Scott’s focus on “the women of 1928” in contrast to Lewis’s bombardiers of BLAST provides a useful and thorough reassessment of the war’s dramatically contrarian effects upon these two aesthetic movements.⁵⁹ Much, in short, has laid the groundwork for the explorations this thesis undertakes.

*1.6: THE CHAPTERS

The plot of Woolf’s first novel, *The Voyage Out*, transports the English heroine Rachel Vinrace to South America, and is often read as a kind of Darwinian or Conradian voyage -- without the benefit of a return. Gillian Beer’s excellent essay, “Virginia Woolf and Prehistory,” reveals just how early and carefully Woolf was reading Darwin, especially *The Voyage of the Beagle*, in which Beer finds many correspondences with Woolf’s own *Voyage*.⁶⁰ But what remains to be discovered is how Woolf’s growing disturbance of conventional plot as a narrative structure, the kind of structure which sustained her first two novels, is also rooted in Darwinian principles. In a diary passage, Woolf recalls the discovery of a technique in the writing of three short stories dating from 1917-1920. “The Mark on the Wall,” “Kew Gardens,” and “An Unwritten Novel” were to come together for two hundred pages or so to develop what would become Woolf’s first experimental novel, *Jacob’s Room*. These, I will argue, are Woolf’s first

⁵⁸ Woolf’s term, first recorded in her diary discussion of John Milton on Sept. 10, 1918: “He deals in horror & immensity & squalor & sublimity, but never in passions of the human heart. Has any great poem ever let in so little light unopened own joys & sorrows?...He was the first of the masculinists....” *Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977), p. 193.

⁵⁹ Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism Vol. 1-2* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995).

attempts to apply some of the ideas she derives from Darwin and the writing of her first two novels to the actual form and feminist aesthetic of her later writing. Darwinian plot is replaced by a Darwinian structure. The next experimental breakthrough comes in the form of Woolf's eminently suggestive piece "Reading," impossible in both its content and structure to define as fiction or nonfiction, memoir or tale. This is also, not coincidentally, when Woolf drafts the above-mentioned essay "Modern Novels" (1919), where she explicitly articulates a new form for the novel, her abiding image and metaphor for it: "a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope."

In order to fully explore the Darwinian dimension to Woolf's feminine aesthetic and narrative form, it is necessary to juxtapose the figure of Darwin in Woolf's development alongside the notions of the Greek ideal that she acquired through ancient Greek literature and her Victorian intellectual inheritance, particularly the philosophy of Plato, which Woolf cherished. While Ricoeur emphasizes how evolution replaces the antiquated time frames of a narrow Christian theology, Darwin ultimately disturbs the Platonic notion of eidetic or ideal forms that are impervious to time and change.⁶¹ Darwin and the Greek ideal represent the broadest intellectual strokes that inform Woolf's contradictory impulses to register the shifting and the solid aspects of life in her narratives. They preoccupy Woolf because the substance of these two thinkers' largest ideas embody the very dialogue and argument Woolf attempts to weave into her fiction—not only into the content and context of her work, but also its structure. Artistic unity, what Plato argued in *Phaedrus* as the internal coherence and structure of a work of art, often meets a Darwinian fate in Woolf's fiction. The *idée fixe*, intransitive states of mind, the centripetal force of Platonic ideals, are all subjected to time, process, transitive flights of

⁶⁰ *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*, Gillian Beer, (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. Press, 1996), pp. 6-28.

consciousness, and the centrifugal force of Darwin's argument of mutability. The Aristotelian unities, the assured chronological framework of the story and the conventions of the temporal narrative, are drastically challenged. "They've changed everything now," Thomas Hardy confided to Woolf on her visit to Max Gate. "We used to think there was a beginning & a middle & an end [in fiction]. We believed in the Aristotelian theory."⁶² At the time, Virginia Woolf was writing *To the Lighthouse*, envisioning how, "it might contain all characters boiled down; & childhood; & then the impersonal thing, which I'm dared to do by my friends, the flight of time, & the consequent break of unity in my design."⁶³ This impersonal thing becomes the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse*, a complete rupture of the formal conventions Hardy and others adhered to; but narrative breaks and flights of time were already a signature of Woolf's fiction, evident from her earliest sketches and short stories. The value Woolf derives from the Greek ideal, however, never altogether disappears from her work, and the struggle between the concepts of Darwinian process and temporality against Platonic stability and unity becomes the ruling dynamic of Woolf's method. They form the "solid and the shifting" aspects of Woolf's writing, a tension that her fiction engages in, embodies, and structurally represents.

To this end, it is worth scrutinizing and foregrounding the parallel universes of Woolf's personal history and some specific aspects of the intellectual history that she inherited. Woolf's childhood interests in Lepidoptera and ancient Greece, and the concurrent intellectual history of some prevalent ideas concerning Darwin and Plato, intersect in Woolf's juvenilia. That Darwin and Plato are prominent figures in Virginia Woolf's earliest fiction is a consequence of her adolescent enthusiasm for both Greek studies and natural history. Virginia Stephen shared these common Victorian schoolboy pursuits, often competitively, with her brother Thoby. From

⁶¹ "Ultimately" because Christian theology had long appropriated Platonic forms as a precursor to the perfect teleology of God's eternal form.

Virginia Stephen's early teens to those early years living in Bloomsbury before World War I, Hellenism and entomology, Greek literature and specimen collecting would coincide and converge often in her daily readings and activities, and have a tremendous impact on the development of her early writing. Both preoccupied and stimulated her imagination in ambivalent, contradictory ways, and because both interests were shared with Thoby, they would resonate with his presence and remind her of his absence long after his sudden, unexpected death in 1906, the same year of Virginia Stephen's earliest pieces of fiction.

One cornerstone of Woolf's fictional forays was laid by Woolf's abiding relationships and discussions with her brother's friends from Cambridge. In the Platonic culture of the Apostles at Cambridge, a select company of learned students basked in the philosophical glow of Bertrand Russell, Alfred North Whitehead, J. M. McTaggart, and G. E. Moore. Although Moore's "The Refutation of Idealism" (1903) eclipsed the influence of both F. H. Bradley and McTaggart's Hegelian idealism, the Platonic ideal of discovering truth through logical analysis was never wholly abandoned by Moore and greatly influenced Russell. All of them, save Whitehead, were philosophically opposed to both Henri Bergson and William James's accounts of temporality, particularly its Darwinian association with truth as mutable as species.⁶⁴ These central figures of the Apostles of Cambridge, most all of them classicists, would come to include Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry, John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey and the rest of the now familiar list who became the principle male components of Bloomsbury; the Cambridge philosophers remained the greatest early influences upon them, particularly Moore. His temperament and pedagogical presence, as is often the case, would have as much or more to do with the dissemination of his ideas among the Bloomsbury males as his actual writing. In his

⁶² July 25, 1926, *Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 3, ed by Anne Olivier Bell (New York: HBJ, 1980) 100.

⁶³ *Ibid* 36.

autobiography, Leonard Woolf describes Moore as the Socrates of their generation, his *Principia Ethica* and his very presence, the *Symposium* and its master transposed to England.⁶⁵ Keynes's *Two Memoirs* would describe the faith-like devotion they developed for Moore's principles, a "religion" where "nothing mattered except states of mind, our own and other people's of course, but chiefly our own. These states of mind were not associated with action or achievement or with consequences. They consisted in timeless, passionate states of contemplation and communion, largely unattached to 'before' and 'after'..."⁶⁶

Such philosophical affectations of Bloomsbury after Cambridge have often been explored, particularly the strange effect they had on the early Bloomsbury gatherings that Virginia and Vanessa Stephen attended with Thoby, where the men remained awkwardly silent for long periods, would always respond to a comment with "It depends what you *mean* by ...," and only spoke to argue over issues like "good" and "beauty" and "reality" as if they were subjects as topical as the weather.⁶⁷ If ancient Greece had indeed been transposed to Cambridge, the results, by Woolf's account, were ambiguous and complicated. It is the 'Oxbridge' of *A Room of One's Own* that excludes women and strives to seal its traditions and privileges tighter than an aquarium; but it is also the Cambridge that produces her husband and very best male friends, who engaged her intellect and took her own philosophical thoughts and aesthetic pursuits seriously.

That personal history, then, also relates to the corresponding cultural and intellectual histories. Reviewing some of the debated issues specific to temporality will, I anticipate, offer a

⁶⁴ See *Philosophical Studies*, (London, Routledge, 1922), where Moore sets out to dispute James's claim in *Pragmatism* that "truths are mutable" by distinguishing between "ideas" and "words". 134ff

⁶⁵ See *Sowing; An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904*, New York: HBJ, 1960) 129ff.

⁶⁶ *Two Memoirs: Dr Melchior: A Defeated Enemy and My Early Beliefs*, intro. by David Garnett (New York: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949) 81-105.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Virginia Woolf's "Old Bloomsbury," *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, (New York: HBJ, 1985) 189ff.

more thorough backdrop to Woolf's narrative form and aesthetics than the commonplace allusion to these texts usually allows. In short, before Darwin becomes *Darwinian* in a discussion of Woolf's fiction, or any of the other names that might become adjectival, the ideas behind these figures of thought merit greater attention. The dialectic Darwin and Grecian antiquity, Plato in particular, elicit from Walter Pater, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Henri Bergson, the debate William James ardently undertakes with Bertrand Russell over such a broad and all-encompassing notion as time, will be discussed in light of the implications temporality had for the participants.

One figure who fused evolution and Greek studies is Jane Ellen Harrison, the innovative archeologist, lecturer, and scholar whom Woolf befriended and revered. Other critics have explored Woolf's use of Harrison in terms of matriarchal alternatives to patriarchy and the processes of feminine ritual⁶⁸, but Harrison's own use of Darwinian principles in her study of classical Greek culture and religion will be addressed here in relation to Woolf's feminist and modernist objectives for fiction. The intellectual history informing Woolf's early fiction creates a philosophical debate over the question of time and narrative form that Darwin's temporal upheaval sets forth and Woolf's fiction addresses. The foundation will then have been laid for the brilliant complexity of Woolf's absorption of this debate concerning Greek and evolutionary temporality, and its consequences on her early fictional experimentation. I include in this analysis the early draft and eventual published version of her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, and then pay special attention to the crucial developmental years preceeding it, particularly the summer of 1906 when Woolf first emerged as a writer living in Bloomsbury, and then 1917-1921, which span Woolf's writing of her second, most conventional novel, *Night and Day*, and

⁶⁸ See, for example, Martha C. Carpentier, *Ritual, myth, and the modernist text: the influence of Jane Ellen Harrison on Joyce, Eliot and Woolf*. (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1998.) Patricia Malka, *Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Jane Harrison's Con/Spiracy*. Studies in Modern Literature (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987); Jane Marcus, "Taking the Bull by the Udders: Sexual Difference in Virginia Woolf—A Conspiracy Theory." *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

the radical experimentation in form and structure evident in *Jacob's Room*. For Woolf, such dualism became freedom, a play of ideas that became a play of form.

✱1.7: RICOEUR'S *TIME AND NARRATIVE*: PREFIGURING WOOLF✱

My reason for laying such stress upon Woolf's personal history, and then upon a more collective and selected intellectual history of Darwin's temporal impact, derives substantial impetus from Paul Ricoeur's analysis of temporality and mimesis in *Time and Narrative*. A few foci of Paul Ricoeur's become essential to this study. My argument, in fact, takes for granted that a hyperconsciousness of time has everything to do with both the narrative forms Woolf employs and the political, philosophical, and ethical considerations of her aesthetics. All novels employ temporality by the narrative necessity of emplotment, but Woolf's novels are obsessively *about time*, and this makes them all the more useful as a study of consciousness and narrative. In Ricoeur's own words, "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal experience."⁶⁹ Behind this is Ricoeur's analysis of Augustine's "distention-intention," a human awareness of time passing that gives intimations of the eternal. (Augustine's chapter on time in the *Confessions*, by Ricoeur's own account of it, is "for the most part, Platonic and Neoplatonic.")⁷⁰ To counter the sense of discordance that an Augustinian awareness of human temporality creates in relation to a cosmic eternity, there is Aristotle's "muthos-mimesis," the process of "emplotment" whereby narrative represents human time and gives it meaning.

⁶⁹ *Time and Narrative, Vol. 1*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 52. Ricoeur analyzes Book 11 of the *Confessions*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 23.

Ricoeur's "hermeneutic circle of narrative and time"⁷¹ circumscribes the very question of character and narrative in Woolf's fiction. His analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* creates a useful paradigm for Woolf's earliest narrative departures, from which she in turn diverges in later work.⁷² He writes that Woolf's "narrative configuration serves as the basis for the experience that its characters have of time, and that the narrative voice of the novel wants to communicate to the reader."⁷³ The relative brevity of the narrative itself is "counterpoised" by the implied immensity of the time narrated. This sets up Ricoeur's categories of "monumental time" (the striking hours of Big Ben, measuring the history of English authority) and "lived time" (how the characters themselves not only respond differently to the striking of the hours but how they live within and outside of the elapsed hours of the day). Ricoeur argues that this fissure between monumental and lived time—nearly indiscernible or wide as life depending upon the character—is the discordance between a phenomenological time perceived internally and a cosmological time measured by clocks and calendars.

Such categories are mutually dependent and inter-subjective in Ricoeur. In fact, "human time," as Ricoeur ultimately defines it, extraordinarily and complexly reconciles the two through the mimetic arts of narrative. Woolf, after all, unifies the narrative of *Mrs. Dalloway*, whose working title was *The Hours*, by the disparate individual lives lived within a single day and registered by London's public clocks. But what Ricoeur's analysis leaves out is an additional fissure that many of Woolf's narratives explore. What happens between a phenomenological time and a cosmological time when this internal, lived time is measured by, with, or through the natural world, not against it?

⁷¹ TN 1, 76.

⁷² *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 2.

⁷³ TN 2, 102.

This is more apropos of what Ricoeur introduces in the third volume of *Time and Narrative* as the “incommensurability, between human time and the time of nature,” brought about by natural history’s breaking of the temporal barrier. It is a paradox: “The length of time of a human life, compared to the range of cosmic time-spans, appears insignificant, whereas it is the very place from which every question of significance arises.”⁷⁴ The Augustinian paradox between the instant of human time and the question of eternity applies here as well, but the “time of nature” does not duplicate eternity. Augustine never doubts the Platonic ideal of eternity translated into a Christian theology—God’s time exists as a final and unfathomable measure—but a geological and evolutionary timeframe dismisses the very question of eternity and simultaneously extends a human time scale, a scale that renders the individual life insignificant in such terms.

Here is a paradox for fictive narrative to explore, except that Ricoeur draws an impassable line between “evolution” (and the other corresponding “notions of change”) and then “history”—on the grounds that evolution works through what isn’t present while narrative is the mimesis of action through human “testimony”:

It is finally the concepts of action and narrative that cannot be transferred from the human sphere to the sphere of nature....Just as it seemed impossible to generate the time of nature on the basis of phenomenological time, so too it now seems impossible to proceed in the opposite direction and to include phenomenological time in the time of nature.⁷⁵

Ricoeur’s principle that narrative is ultimately the human testimony of the author or a cultural history, which contaminates the sense, however detached, of a cosmic scale existing outside of our apperception of it, is not to be disputed here. But the exclusion of a narrative at least

⁷⁴ TN3, 90.

⁷⁵ TN3, 91

attempting a phenomenology of *human time that is the time of nature*, ignores much of Woolf's intentionality. The diffusion of self so often noted in Woolf—the losing of personality, what Woolf also imagines as “the world seen without a self” and “anonymity”—⁷⁶ is the mimetic configuration of personal time in many of her narratives. Perhaps Ricoeur suggests this when he comments that *The Waves* borders on an experimentation that leaves the mimetic arts entirely, but this aspect of Woolf's fiction has many manifestations.⁷⁷ The earlier, traditional novel, *Night and Day*, displays the intent. When Katharine Hilbury strolls through Kew Gardens with Ralph Denham, Ralph begins to discuss botany. Katharine wishes “he would go on forever, showing her how science felt not quite blindly for the law that ruled their endless variations,” an allusion to evolution that also perhaps more significantly allows Katharine contemplation “of that other part of life where thought constructs a destiny which is independent of human beings” (281). Natural history does significantly measure narrative perspective in Woolf, even as the narrative attempts to measure the span of natural history. Woolf embeds Katherine's deepest capacity for happiness in this contemplative region that “entirely lacked self-consciousness” (282). Katharine experiences time on a cosmic scale, and for her, this is phenomenological as well as cosmological. *Night and Day* may be Woolf's most conventional novel, but the ideas expressed therein are a prelude to Woolf's future narrative experiments. Woolf's narrative constructs a destiny independent of human beings, even as it makes their awareness of that destiny central.

Ricoeur's sense of a dialectic at work between the “time of the world” and “lived time,” a cosmic time and a human time, helps us to better analyze and understand the methodology with which Woolf creates out of Darwin's temporal expansion a plurality of times that her characters resist or acquiesce to, or both. At crucial moments, cosmic time *is* lived time in Woolf.

⁷⁶ See *To the Lighthouse*, where Mrs. Ramsay knits herself into “losing personality,” p. 63; also Bernard's final, protracted monologue in *The Waves*, p. 287. Woolf uses anonymity as a value in both *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* and

*1.8: RICOEUR'S FIGURATIONS: WOOLF'S "PRENARRATIVE" AS PREHISTORY

A second, interrelated aspect of Ricoeur's analyses involves Woolf's own resistance to Platonic unity or Aristotelian mimesis, the resistance itself a formal approach and artistic creed Woolf shares with Roger Fry that becomes synonymous with an early Bloomsbury aesthetic: "The rejection of mimesis and concentration on the play of abstract form."⁷⁸ Ricoeur pays particular attention to the advent of the modern novel, including *Mrs. Dalloway*, precisely because it "contests the very principle of *order* that is the root of the idea of plot."⁷⁹ Part of this resistance to plot occurs simply by a shift of focus from action to character in the modern novel. Ricoeur further acknowledges that what Woolf's work suggests is "incompleteness of personality, the diversity of the levels of the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious, the stirring of unformulated desires, the inchoative and evanescent character of feelings. The notion of plot here seems to be especially in trouble."⁸⁰ Ricoeur's own rebuttal to this acknowledgement is simple but worth repeating: "Yet nothing in these successive expansions of character at the expense of the plot escapes the formal principle of configuration and therefore the concept of emplotment."⁸¹ We forget that the rejection of mimesis represents a schism that Frank Kermode reminds us is "meaningless without reference to some prior condition; the absolutely new is simply unintelligible, even as a novelty."⁸² If temporality is reimagined in Woolf, if it breaks with convention, it still cannot escape its own configuration. A difficult

becomes more and more attracted to the idea in her later diary entries.

⁷⁷ TN2, 97

⁷⁸ Christopher Reed, "Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics," *Virginia Woolf* ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004). *Bloom's Literary Reference Online*. Facts on File, Inc. This is Reed's account of the early Bloomsbury aesthetic, which he argues evolved after WWI in an "attempt to reintegrate representation into the formalist paradigm without sacrificing an ideal of purely aesthetic experience."

⁷⁹ *Time and Narrative Vol. 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 9-10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 10.

⁸² *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2000)116.

narration, conscious of and playful with every established rule of chronology and temporality, is still a strategy of representation. *What* Woolf represents in her experimental narrative is itself telling.

This component in Ricoeur's analysis of modern fiction proves especially valuable in relation to Woolf because of her keen awareness of every narrative convention that she transgresses and the reasons she chooses to do so. Woolf's original ventures into Greek and natural history provide a corridor into some of the larger intellectual responses to Darwin and Plato from other seminal writers and thinkers, who in turn inform Woolf's later modernist sensibility of time and narrative. In Ricoeur's terms, there is a "prenarrative structure of experience."⁸³ This he defines as a *prefiguration* that represents a cultural "competency" shared between a writer and an audience before any specific convention can be traversed. This "conceptual network" is a host of shared cultural assumptions, a practical understanding of the symbols, signs, semantics, rules, and norms that govern the given idea of textual order. Following the cultural anthropology of Clifford Geertz, particularly Geertz's notion that "culture is public because meaning is," Ricoeur establishes a semiotics to reading that acts mimetically as a prevision to narrative revision: "To imitate or represent action is first to preunderstand what human acting is, in its semantics, its symbolic system, its temporality. Upon this preunderstanding, common to both poets and their readers, emplotment is constructed and, with it, textual and literary mimetics."⁸⁴

In Ricoeur's threefold process to narrative representation—playfully dubbed *mimesis*₁, *mimesis*₂, and *mimesis*₃—*prefiguration* becomes *configuration* through a literary or historical text, leading to the final step, *refiguration* through the phenomenological act of reading. The

⁸³ TN 1, 60. It should be noted that Ricoeur's use of the term "poet" is generalized to all narrative creators, taking his cue from Aristotle's *Poetics*.

crucial level is the configuring power of mimesis₂, what Ricoeur describes as the “kingdom of *as-if*,” the process whereby narrative mediates “between what precedes fiction and what follows it,” the intermediary step.⁸⁵ This, in the more common vernacular, is the mode occupied by the fiction writer, the author’s organization or “*emplotment*” of the narrative and the multiform modes of temporalities employed. It mediates our preconceptions of what narrative is and then is consequently fulfilled by the third function of mimesis, the very act of reading. A narrative refigures the temporal world in all of its complexities and intersecting fields of reference and in the process provides new meaning through the hermeneutics and the phenomenological act of reading.

I employ Ricoeur here, in short, to trace in Woolf the most significant cultural assumptions concerning Darwin’s evolutionary theory, and then later “the Greek ideal,” a process that will backtrack through the prefigurations of Woolf’s childhood against the intellectual backdrop of some other major thinkers. Of particular emphasis will be some of the crucial early essays and short stories where Woolf begins to work out at the level of plot and allusion much of the intellectual difficulties necessary to ground the radical departures in narrative form that would characterize her mature fiction. My analysis of how Woolf mediates this prenarrative field of experience through her earliest short stories, novels, and the first experimental short stories—wherein Woolf tests many of the ideas derived from Darwin and Plato—establishes what might be described as an ontogeny and phylogeny of thought that prefigures the young Virginia Woolf’s ventures into a more radical narrative form. That is, Woolf’s individual development as a writer shares the temporal anxieties of many other figures we have subsequently categorized as Modernists, but with crucial distinguishing characteristics,

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 54-64.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

not the least being her emphasis upon gender. Her early experiments with narrative form mediate and transform the very cultural norms she represents, giving them new meaning. Woolf's early fictional sketches and essays at once recapitulate and repudiate the cultural assumptions that inform the prenarrative to her narratives, the prehistory to her personal history, the classical past to her modern present. What is most innovative in Woolf's narrative technique might be the way she mediates the prefigurative understanding of mimesis by *including* the prefigurations in her narrative configurations rather than simply contesting and transforming them. Woolf's dual engagement with the Victorian past and the Modernist present operates by exposing the very process of transformation: the solid and the shifting, the Greek ideal against the Darwinian, the masculine and the feminine, exist in dynamic temporal oppositions.

What follows is the ontogeny—Virginia Woolf's own embryonic personal history mediated by her experiences with natural history and Greek studies. There is a personal lexicon to Virginia Woolf's writing—she once mused whether “I ...deal thus openly in autobiography & call it fiction?”⁸⁶ At this point, she had just published *Night and Day* and settled upon the direction for her next novel, *Jacob's Room*, the most Hellenic of her works but one narrated with an amateur naturalist's perspective. A semantics and a rich semiotics of childhood experience resonate with these subjects.

⁸⁶ Wednesday 14 January, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. Two 1920-1924* (New York: HBJ, 1978) 7.

Chapter Two

***The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*: Early Evolutionary Plots and Narrative Destinations in Virginia Woolf**

*2.1: VOYAGING

The evolutionary trope that charts civilization through its journey inward is well-traveled in Virginia Woolf's writing from the very beginning. *The Voyage Out* (1915) is, in large measure, the voyage in. At the level of plot, the young Rachel Vinrace journeys to South America. The narrative, at times, refashions some staples of the masculine expeditionary tale, including the ascent of a mountain and the boat-ride into the heart of a jungle. What Rachel sees and takes in on these journeys clearly has an effect on the narrative, including the fever she contracts in the jungle, which allows Woolf to kill off her heiress of the ages just at the point when she should fulfill the conventions of the romance novel. But as mere plot those journeys are about as epic as James, Cam, and Mr. Ramsay rowing their boat *To the Lighthouse*. There, most of the dramatic action occurs within Lily Briscoe's inner vision of the canvas before her. Like in Bruegel's painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, the epic moment registers, but "its human position" is insignificantly rendered alongside the quotidian. This is in part the vision of humanity in *The Voyage Out*, Woolf's first large canvas. Rachel spends most of her time on this grand tour—to the terra incognita of South America—in the great indoors. This brave new world, including the amusing array of British tourists representative of English society, could just as easily be London. There is teatime, chaperoned public interactions among the sexes, even a quaint formal dance. Two of the great archetypal plots of romance literature—the adventure tale and the comedy of manners—salute and curtsy each other rather awkwardly.

Both Joseph Conrad and Henry James would have understood Woolf's conception of her novel, as they had shown how problematic these two plotlines had become in the modern world. Kurtz in *The Heart of Darkness* fascinates the retrospective narrator Marlow because all of Europe has contributed to his making. Conrad famously has Marlow suggest that Kurtz is capable of anything because everything is in him, including the dark horror of a primitive past. The mercantile mission from Europe to the prehistoric heart of savage Africa, ostensibly to find Kurtz, indeed finds Europe's savagery at the heart of its historic trafficking in colonialism. Kurtz dies in this knowledge and Marlow lives to tell and bury the tale. Conversely, Henry James's Milly Theale takes the return route from the newfound land back to the old civilization in *The Wings of the Dove*. She carries the "old flower" of the new world back into the heart of European civilization.⁸⁷ The seed she plants works into the consciousness of the other characters, even as she dies. Her legacy is not her progeny, but the memory of her alive in others.

Woolf's first novel, then, could be viewed as a Conradian voyage that establishes a Jamesian relation. Rachel, in other words, fascinates because she is *expected* to carry so little, yet still she does. Much of the story is about what others attempt to put in to her and how ill-prepared she is for either the physical burden or the mental baggage. This gives rise to many of Rachel's alternating outbursts of exasperation and the ensuing silence. The adventure tale and the marriage crisis are juxtaposed. The two conventional vessels of narrative crash and sink each other's prefigurative destinies: the adventure never returns home and the heroine dies well before reaching the altar. This is an early statement by Woolf on the status of promising but uneducated women in the modern world who attempt to escape the maladaptive conditions of the English patriarchy. It is also one important aspect of Woolf's reconfiguration of evolutionary plot in

⁸⁷ James's metaphor for Milly in his "Preface to the New York Edition of *The Wings of the Dove*."

literature. Foregrounding an expedition alongside marital conventions, in the midst of a primordial backdrop, exposes the origins and challenges the agency of both. The English heroine as she had been conceived in the past could not function in the cultural present. Woolf's outing asserts that it is time for narrative fiction to explore why.

*2.2: RETURNS

The voyage from evolutionary plot to what I will call *evolutionary form* is itself the exploration that Woolf undertakes in her narrative. Consider that after *The Voyage Out*, Woolf's fiction stays close to home. It is uncanny how Darwin's story, and not merely his findings, becomes in large part the shaping of the Modern novel's. Much has been made of the great gap of time between Darwin's revelation of the theory of evolution and the quarter century that elapses before he publicly reveals it, a revelation forced only after Alfred Russell Wallace comes to nearly the same theory of evolution independently.⁸⁸ But this aporia of time only emphasizes what Darwin's biographer Janet Browne dubs "the power of place."⁸⁹ After the voyage of the *H.M.S. Beagle*, Darwin stays put. The nautical adventurer, the pioneering naturalist returns home to settle into the domesticity of Victorian country life, and yet the work done at Downe subverts an entire tradition. What makes Darwin's character compelling is not simply that his scientific writing is so persuasive but that his life was so literary. The Darwinian figure, taking in the great expanse and portent of time, becomes figurative of the internalization of Modernist fiction. Perhaps Woolf's pseudo-biography *Orlando* is the exception that proves the rule, but his/her gender-bending adventure is, in large measure, time-travel, which locates the epic adventures and colonial conquests both in the cultural past and within the inherited present. By

⁸⁸ There are several examples, most recently Adam Gopnik's *Angels and Ages* (2009).

⁸⁹ The title of Browne's second book of her biography on Darwin.

the time that Orlando lands in the present, the aristocratic house and its entitlement stand for a cultural inheritance that resides within Orlando herself.⁹⁰ The epic adventures come home to England through the human vessels who have kept the seeds and keepsakes, trinkets and trophies of conquest; “savage” countries, it seems, have been explored and perhaps glossed with the veneer of civilization, but the savage within had only just taken up residence.

“This, too, has been a place of darkness,” murmurs Marlow on the waters of the River Thames, but its temporal location in the primitive past needs to be found in the uncharted river of the Conradian Congo. The novel must go to those Darwinian landscapes to address what is primordial in the European present. There is another adventure, another discovery to track on the heels of the scientific voyage of the nineteenth century naturalists. Woolf abridges her narrative configuration of the natural world (and all of its spoils) by accessing its evolutionary dimensions *within* the confines of civility. She replaces a Darwinian plot, as in her first novel, with a narrative form that is itself evolutionary. A South American jungle can be a wooded acre behind a landed property. The prehistorical may be excavated from the pastoral landscape of England; and vestiges of the past may be discerned in the quotidian. Gillian Beer: “In *the Voyage Out* it is necessary to travel to remote countries to discover [the primeval]. The primitive is still figured as outside self. But in *the Waves*, and even more in *Between the Acts*, the prehistoric is seen not simply as part of a remote past, but as contiguous, continuous, a part of ordinary present-day life.”⁹¹ There is a significant leap between Woolf’s earliest novel and the mature works of the ‘30s, both in the rendering of the primitive and in the actual narrative configurations. What Beer does not explore is how Woolf’s contiguous, continuous reading of the prehistoric in the present informs her departure from more established structures of narrative.

⁹⁰ Consider, for example, that Woolf begins her “Modern” chapter with the sentence, “It was time to go indoors.”

⁹¹ “Virginia Woolf and Prehistory,” *The Common Ground* 9.

In *The Voyage Out* (1915), Terence Hewet looks to the profusion of the rain forest and exclaims, “That’s where the Elizabethans got their style,” but in the writing that follows, Woolf looks to the structure of Elizabethan sentences themselves. The essay “Reading” (1919), for example, never leaves the bookshelves of a manor house and yet it seeks to answer some of the same questions about evolutionary origins and cultural inheritances. In the short timeframe between these two works, Woolf learns a narrative economy, an evolutionary shorthand whereby narrative technique can carry what was in her more conventional novel-writing the story narrated.

*2.3: MELYMBROSIA’S CAMBRIDGIAN EXPLOSION

When Woolf’s early heroines do voyage out of their civilized settings, the results are most telling. Woolf’s more diminutive expeditions into the South American jungle occur for one of the principle reasons Conrad takes us there in the first place: the shrinking scale of human beings in the natural world post-Darwin. This sensibility is intensified in Woolf’s fiction. *Melymbrosia*, the earlier narrative drafts of *The Voyage Out*, describes the river journey into the thick of the woods with complete omniscience, both temporal and spatial: “Where from the top of the mountain they could see a dark cloud of green, there the river ran, further and further away, leaving civilization behind it, passing through unlit reaches...” The sounds and lights of civilization disappear: “only birds cry, trees come down, and the fruit can be heard slipping and dropping on the ground.; and now and then some beast howls in agony or rage. Wild creatures seeing you glitter their eyes at you from the branch, and the butterflies circle in your path.”⁹² Woolf’s aerial perspective cuts its own path through the forest, but this is not a biblical Eden. Only after months of traversing the forest are Woolf’s readers given a hint of the source of

⁹² *Melymbrosia* 279.

things: “You are now encircled by the earth, in the very heart of stone and dust. As leopard and birds have been born of the forest, so have human beings. But after stepping a few hundred miles into this world, they have ceased as though on the verge of a precipice, or on the edge of the sea.”⁹³ This is not the dark wood of Dante, or even Hawthorne’s wilderness, which his sinners approached to glimpse a world wilder and larger than the one made by their puritanical forefathers. The search for human origins here is apparent, and the impenetrable forest serves as a frontier of awareness. Physically to cross it is to enter the expanse of time and descent that evolutionary theory proposes. Woolf’s woods are not a Christian tribulation or a spiritual journey. The landscape is post-Christian because it is post-Darwin. The time frame is evolutionary.

All of this occurs before Woolf even begins the “proposed voyage” of her characters. While the narrator makes these grand omniscient sweeps of space and time, the characters’ journey itself has not begun. By the time Woolf revises *The Voyage Out*’s expedition up the South American river and into the woods, her narration now makes a sharper delineation between the prehistoric past and the English presence. “Since the time of Elizabeth,” Woolf’s narrator tells us,

very few people had seen the river, and nothing had been done to change its appearance from what it was to the eyes of the Elizabethan voyagers. The time of Elizabeth was only distant from the present time by a moment of space compared with the ages which had passed since the water had run between those banks, and the green thickets swarmed there, and the small trees had grown to huge wrinkled trees in solitude.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Ibid.* 280.

⁹⁴ *The Voyage Out* 308.

Woolf's absorption of evolutionary theory has grown more sophisticated. In *Melymbrosia*, Woolf slips into hyperbolic phrasing to describe these prehistoric forests. *Melymbrosia*'s "trees ... have stood since the beginning of the world," for instance.⁹⁵ Hints of origins are still there in *The Voyage Out*, but the temporal dimensions are more precise. A geological time enters her conception of the present, the time of Elizabethan explorers, and the expansive past that records the river's earliest tributaries, first thickets, and the ensuing centuries of flora growth. At the same time, omniscience vanishes. Though the narrator discourses upon evolutionary and geological surveys of the terrain, the aerial perspective is limited to the parameters of her plot. Now the grand view is *recalled* by the expedition party members who, a few weeks before, ascended a nearby mountain and took in the few miles of river visible.

In revision, Woolf subtly transforms the descent through time and history to one that her characters share and experience. When the boat churns up the river, "They seemed to be driving into the heart of the night, for the trees closed in front of them, and they could hear all round them the rustling of leaves."⁹⁶ The passengers grow less talkative while "clustered together" and take in the "same spot of deep gloom on the banks."⁹⁷ Terence and Rachel traverse the forest themselves, feel for themselves the thick fecundity of life within the woods: "the light grew dimmer... The path narrowed and turned; it was hedged in by dense creepers which knotted tree to tree, and burst here and there into star-shaped crimson blossoms."⁹⁸ Gillian Beer pays specific attention to this particular passage due to its close rendering of a scene found in *The Voyage of the Beagle*, but it is also the "tangled bank" of *The Origin of Species*, the thought that has its first evolutionary implication in Darwin's notebook of 1939 after he had landed upon his theory: "it is difficult to believe in the dreadful but quiet war going on in the peaceful woods and smiling

⁹⁵ *Melymbrosia* 279.

⁹⁶ *VO* 309.

fields.”⁹⁹ In *The Voyage Out*, “The trees and the undergrowth seemed to be strangling each other near the ground in a multitudinous wrestle.”¹⁰⁰ The characters sense the implications of evolution by traversing the primeval forests of South America; by seeing, smelling, feeling, hearing, and touching the remote past that has become present. They are located within rather than outside of the natural world. The destination of this expedition is enveloped in the prehistorical past.

*2.4: DESCENT AS DISAPPEARANCE, UNSELFCONSCIOUSNESS AS AWARENESS

The consequence of this confrontation with origins is at once self-discovery and abnegation. On the boat in the dark, the characters feel vulnerable and exposed. It becomes a “question of nakedness” in the jungle, where the Victorian garb is not only impractical but ridiculous in the heat. Even in pitch darkness, where they are “almost invisible to one another,” it takes great persuasion on the part of two of the younger characters to convince Mrs. Flushing that “no one would notice if by chance some part of her which had been concealed for forty-five years was laid bare to the human eye.”¹⁰¹ The joke brings home the larger metaphor of nakedness, of being divested of all the accoutrements of human civilization that provide the illusion of safety and the security of social standing, not to mention separation from and superiority over the jungle’s inhabitants.

Even more significant is how the narration suggests that such exposure divests the characters of outline and form; the parameters of the ego seem to soften and shrink, swallowed by the jungle. Characters disappear, lose contact with one another, and grow silent. “The great darkness had the usual effect of taking away all desire for communication by making their words

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *VO* 311.

⁹⁹ March 12, 1939, “E Notebook” *Charles Darwin’s Notebooks* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1987) 114.

¹⁰⁰ *VO* 311-12.

sound thin and small.” In the light of day, Hewet attempts to read some poetry out loud, but the “number of moving things entirely vanquished his words” and the jungle’s response mocks his effort: “A bird gave a wild laugh, a monkey chuckled a malicious question, and, as fire fades in the hot sunshine, his words flickered and went out.”¹⁰² Words fail, as do constructs of stability and stasis; the life of sensations and feelings subsume the narrative, as Woolf attempts to represent a space antecedent to language and perhaps even consciousness. At various stages of the expedition, the characters are “unable to frame any thoughts” and “their steps unconsciously quickened”; the ceaseless activity of the river below them seems a “senseless and cruel churning,” and the “jarring cry of animals” is heard overhead. Hirst, the young Cambridge intellectual who at one point proclaims himself one of the five or so young men who will matter, finally ejaculates, “These trees get on one’s nerves—it’s all so crazy. God’s undoubtedly mad. What sane person could have conceived a wilderness like this, and peopled it with apes and alligators? I should go mad if I lived here—raving mad.”¹⁰³ Hirst’s world, even its animals, is “peopled,” and his god is created in his own image, a rational being divorced from an organic world whom the narrative, in an evolutionary trope, once again returns to the wilderness and a temporal process.

The cloistered virtue of the English public school education has not completely taken over the figure of Terence, and that he fails to finish Cambridge tellingly allows him not only access to Rachel’s feelings but contact with the “irresistible force of his own feelings. He was drawn on and on away from all he knew, slipping over barriers and past landmarks into unknown waters...enveloped in deeper unconsciousness.”¹⁰⁴ This is the other crucial aspect of the jungle, its stripping of self-consciousness that paradoxically raises awareness of a force greater than

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 310.

¹⁰² VO 311-12.

themselves. When Terence and Rachel “proposed to walk into the woods together,”¹⁰⁵ Woolf proposes the most radical task of her novel—to move the romance of Terence and Rachel into an evolutionary landscape that grounds not only their relations but also the ideals upon which love is founded. Their declaration of love occurs in the densest part of the jungle. Terence picks up a red fruit and throws it as high as he can. “When it dropped, he would speak. They heard the flapping of great wings; they heard the fruit go pattering through the leaves and eventually fall with a thud.”¹⁰⁶ By such an action, Woolf’s narrator means to suggest the ascent of feeling dropped into the origins of struggle and survival. The forbidden fruit spills its secret. After declaring their love, they too “releasing themselves, dropped to the earth.”¹⁰⁷

*2.5: EVOLUTION OF ROMANCE

Successful or not, the attempt to return romance to its evolutionary origins is bold and in subtle ways original to Woolf’s fiction. The obvious precursor once again is *Heart of Darkness*, where there is not Woolf’s company of tourists adventuring into the heart of the jungle but an imperial crew of merchants and mercenaries led by Marlow to retrieve Kurtz and return him to civilization. No doubt, Woolf has this narrative in mind, as Conrad’s collection *Youth* that included it was the text she claimed a few years later to have appreciated more than any other by a living author.¹⁰⁸ Her first novel is in some important aspects a parodist’s response to it. Conrad’s story is remarkably absent of women, but there are two powerfully evocative figures with whom Kurtz is romantically entangled: the fierce savage queen of the natives and “the

¹⁰³ *Ibid* 321.

¹⁰⁴ VO 311.

¹⁰⁵ VO 315.

¹⁰⁶ VO 316.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁸ See *Modern Novels*, for starters, where Woolf gives Conrad (and Thomas Hardy) her “unconditional gratitude” over any of her contemporaries or immediate living predecessors. Woolf wrote several essays on Joseph Conrad’s fiction during this time period, and mentions him often in her diaries. More on this to come.

Intended” bride waiting for him in a European capital. The savage woman, whose arresting presence Marlow describes as “wild-eyed and magnificent,” who comes to stand for the “colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life” at the heart of the wilderness, who is “an image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul,”¹⁰⁹ disappears back into the jungle. She remains as inscrutable as the final moral of Kurtz that Marlow never reveals to the Intended or the civilization she represents. Marlow famously lies to the Intended, tells her that the last words Kurtz pronounced were her name rather than “The horror! The horror!” It keeps the romance of Conrad’s *Romance* uncanny and divided, the dual presence of the savage woman and the Intended suggestive of each other, but situated in their proper, respective places.

With sincerity, Woolf brings her intended to the jungle not only to find love and herself, but also to come face to face with the savage woman. If the ultimate answers remain at best mysterious, at worst incommunicable, no lie will be told. Rachel and Terence believe in their passion for each other and call it love, but they are quickly enveloped in the natural world and by the obfuscating inability to make sense of it. Their feelings render them less communicative, their declarations of love less sure, and their very sense of selves unsettled in relation to each other and the procession of birds, beasts and humans. In the thick haze of their emotions, Mrs. Flushing interrupts them with a little amateur reading of Darwin about love and life: “One reads a lot about love—that’s why poetry’s so dull. But what happens in real life?” she coyly asks them. “It ain’t love!”¹¹⁰ Such a dressing down of sexual discussion and marital convention renders Terence “unintelligible” and Mr. Flushing attempts to return a little urbanity to the conversation by explaining his wife’s position with her upbringing. It was “very unnatural—unusual, I should say. They had no mother” and a father who cared only about racehorses and

¹⁰⁹ *Heart of Darkness*, ed. with intro. By Ross C Murfin (New York: Bedford, 1989) 76.

¹¹⁰ VO 320.

Greek statues. He bathed his children in the stable, even when a sheet of winter ice covered the bath: “We had to get in; if we didn’t, we were whipped. The strong ones lived—the others died. What you call the survival of the fittest—a most excellent plan, I daresay, if you’ve thirteen children!”¹¹¹ Mr. Flushing attempts to mollify the story by exclaiming, “And all this going on in the heart of England, in the nineteenth century!” But his wife’s reduction of marriage and family to sex and survival is not dismissed by the developing narrative.

The final destination of the journey is the native village in the heart of the jungle. The tourists go to observe primitive man in his natural habitat, but the observed gazes back at them. “As they sauntered about, the stare followed them, passing over their legs, their bodies, their heads, curiously not without hostility, like the crawl of a winter fly.” The stare comes from the villagers, not the English, the final eyes the most unsettling to Terence and Rachel: “As she drew apart her shawl and uncovered her breast to the lips of her baby, the eyes of a woman never left their faces, although they moved uneasily under her stare, and finally turned away, rather than stand there looking at her any longer.”¹¹² Instead of a lovers’ embrace, or an affirmation of marital continuity from savage to homo Britannicus, you have the evolutionary purpose, the shawl of romance uncovered—the savage woman sits alone, nursing her baby, fully conscious of the foreign presence, but unashamed of the exposure. Those exposed are the two newly engaged: “‘Well,’ Terence sighed at length, ‘it makes us seem insignificant, doesn’t it?’ Rachel agreed.” The social implications of Darwin in this passage are quite clear. The whole convention of matrimony and the tradition of the romance novel, at its biological source, is the continuation of the species, and the consequence of erotic love, idealized or not, is the woman bearing and nursing progeny. Rachel is ill equipped to either accept her engagement or to fight

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.* 332.

off the jungle fever, yet she still experiences them both bodily. Woolf's novel does not buckle to the expectations of romantic convention, and the social consequences of her heroine's acceptance of a marriage remain unfulfilled.

✳ 2.6: NIGHT AND DAY'S VISIONARY BIOLOGY

Most of the conventions of novel writing, however, remain intact in *The Voyage Out*. There were several intermediary steps, none more important than how Woolf's own record of narrative innovation begins with a "discovery of technique." Woolf recalls that unforgettable day in 1917, "...the day I wrote *The Mark on the Wall*—all in a flash, as if flying, after being kept stone breaking for months."¹¹³ The quarry of her frustration was *Night and Day*, by Woolf's own estimate her most conventional novel, useful to her as compositional exercise but possessing none of the immediacy or innovation of those first "little pieces"—the short stories eventually published in *Monday or Tuesday* (1921). Her diary describes this breakthrough as a "new form for a novel," her three short stories—"The Mark on the Wall," "Kew Gardens," and "An Unwritten Novel"—taking hands and stretching to two hundred pages or so: "doesn't that get closer & yet keep form & speed, & enclose everything, everything?"¹¹⁴ The result would be Woolf's first experimental novel, *Jacob's Room*; but the composition of *Night and Day*, concurrent with the writing of the short stories, was nevertheless essential in the process. Writing *Night and Day* provides Woolf the formal outline and the structural blueprint from which she departs in "Kew Gardens" and the stories that ensued. It describes what her fiction might later accomplish.

¹¹³ *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, IV*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: HBJ 1981) 231.

¹¹⁴ *Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. II*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell, (New York: HBJ 1980) 13-14.

Night and Day all transpires in England, but like *The Voyage Out*, the short excursions outdoors are crucial—these ventures are, at the furthest, to the English countryside, and most significantly to the city of London’s great repositories of wild nature: the zoological and botanical gardens. Towards the end of the novel, Woolf takes a quartet of lovers to the zoo to sort out the emotional attachments between Ralph and Katharine, on the one hand, and Cassandra and William on the other. Instead of a “tea-tray” between them, Ralph sees Katharine against “a background of pale grottos and sleek hides.”¹¹⁵ No longer hostess to the eminent guests of the afternoons at the Hilbery residence, Katharine feeds a different relation that seems familiar enough: the giraffes observe her “from their melancholy eminence, and the pink-lined trunks of elephants cautiously abstracted buns from her outstretched hands.”¹¹⁶ The procession is impressive: pythons, camels, lizards, frogs, fish, alligators, caterpillars, snakes, a “lately emerged and semiconscious butterfly” and an array of flowers that together “produced an atmosphere in which human beings tended to look pale and to fall silent.”¹¹⁷ While not nearly the dangerous excursion undertaken in *The Voyage Out*, the consequences are the same. Communication is stifled and humanity feels less significant or self-assured, even in the artificially constructed and confined environs. By the monkey cages, where William fails to attract them by rattling the bars and offering an apple, Katharine sees him as “a wretched misanthropical ape.” The whole scene and the jealousy it induces in William “pulled her down into some horrible swamp of her nature where the primeval struggle between man and woman still rages.”¹¹⁸ Through this descent into evolutionary origins, the romance plot is settled—Cassandra and William go their own way, leaving Katharine free and available to Ralph.

¹¹⁵ *Night and Day* 312

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 312-313.

¹¹⁸ 314.

In a large measure, what Woolf attempts to work through in *Night and Day* is how to allow her heroine the prospect of marriage without fettering her to the shackles of patriarchal society. Rachel must die in *The Voyage Out*, but what about Katharine? This is the first novel conceived after Woolf's own marriage, and the adjustment by any biographical or biological account was neither smooth nor easy for either Leonard or Virginia. Part of the resolution, brilliantly elucidated by Molly Hite, is Woolf's construction of the "visionary body" in fiction that enables "Woolf to create passionate and sensuous female characters without embroiling them in the societal consequences of female eroticism that had shaped the romance plot."¹¹⁹ An intimation of this comes in the impersonal, unconscious detachment that Rachel Vinrace exhibits when she plays the piano, or when Terence Hewet notices that "existence now went on in two different layers," after he and Rachel declare their love in the jungle and rejoin the party. "Here were the Flushings talking, talking somewhere high up in the air above him, and he and Rachel had dropped to the bottom of the world together."¹²⁰ In *Night and Day*, the impersonal detachment of Rachel playing music is related directly to the rapturous, ecstatic feeling usually vouchsafed only for men and women in love.

Katharine's passion is mathematics, physics in particular, and her daydreams often wander to the signs and numbers enumerating celestial bodies visible in the night sky. Molly Hite focuses upon a curious passage where Katharine's attention is divided:

She was feeling happier than she had felt in her life. If Denham could have seen how visibly books of algebraic symbols, pages all speckled with dots and dashes and twisted bars, came before her eyes as they trod the Embankment, his secret joy in her attention might have been dispersed. She went on, saying, 'Yes, I see...but how would that help

¹¹⁹ "Virginia Woolf's Two Bodies" *Genders* 31 2000, 3.

¹²⁰ *VO* 319.

you?... Your brother has passed his examination?’ so sensibly, that he had constantly to keep his brain in check; and all the time she was in fancy looking up through a telescope at white shadow-cleft disks which were other worlds, until she felt herself possessed of two bodies, one walking by the river with Denham, the other concentrated to a silver globe aloft in the fine blue space above the scum of vapours that was covering the visible world.¹²¹

What interests Hite is that Katharine’s division here is not conceived in the classical tradition of mind-body or soul-body splits. Instead, Katharine feels herself “possessed of two bodies,” the one engaging Ralph Denham in conversation just after he has professed to her that she is his ideal, and the other fully embodied in the acute sensations of her mental preoccupations with mathematics. Hite calls these two bodies social and visionary: “The social body walks Katharine Hilbery through the comic version of the romance plot with its sanctioned euphoric conclusion. The visionary body is the site of her most acute sensations,” the one “opposing Victorian aesthetics with ‘vision’ and ‘aloofness,’” the qualities of aesthetic detachment that became “hallmarks of her own modernist practice.”¹²² In this, the last of Woolf’s novels with a conventional plot, Woolf attempts a resolution of the romance by giving Katharine a visionary body that evades the obstructions and interruptions and subjugations that the social body nonetheless must experience. Ralph in this sense is a suitable suitor because Katharine can at once be with him and be elsewhere, both present physically and physically absent amid the crowd of stars.

But part of this resolution does require some merging of the visionary and the social body that I read with different emphasis than Hite. Ralph is not oblivious to the meandering feelings

¹²¹ *Night and Day*, ed. by Julia Briggs (New York: Penguin, 1992) 254.

¹²² “Virginia Woolf’s Two Bodies” 6-7.

of Katharine. At their parting, he asks her to let him know the “decision.” When Katharine hesitates, “He guessed her difficulties; he knew in a second that she heard nothing...”¹²³ In other words, Ralph discovers that her mind (if not her body) was elsewhere, and he immediately proposes that they discuss things at Kew Gardens, a place where the social and visionary bodies, the male and female beings, may be properly aligned.

* 2.7: NIGHT AND DAY'S RESOLUTION AT KEW.

By any account of the novel, the Kew Gardens chapter in *Night and Day* is pivotal. Katharine and Ralph stroll through “these legendary gardens.”¹²⁴ Ralph shows off a bit, prodding the flowers, Woolf writes, “with the particular touch of a botanist,” calling them by their Latin names. He speaks to her of bulbs and seeds, of living things endowed with sex, “and susceptibilities which adapted themselves by all manners of ingenious devices to live and beget life..., by processes which might reveal the secrets of human existence.” For Katharine, “No discourse could have worn a more welcome sound.... For weeks she had heard nothing that made such pleasant music in her mind.” Katharine wishes “he would go on forever, showing her how science felt not quite blindly for the law that ruled their endless variations,” but also perhaps more significantly, how it allows her contemplation “of that other part of life where thought constructs a destiny which is independent of human beings.” This moment is crucial. Katharine’s absorption in Ralph’s discussion on evolution transforms the trees into “symbols of the vast external world which reckes so little of the happiness, of the marriages or deaths of individuals.” Even as Katharine walks through the rock garden and orchid house with Ralph, her happiness ironically exists in a discussion that takes her outside of herself and the determined

¹²³ *N&D* 255.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 281

course of her romance and marriage. Woolf embeds Katharine's deepest capacity for happiness in this contemplative region that "entirely lacked self-consciousness."¹²⁵

This scene certainly resonates with Woolf's excursion in *The Voyage Out*, where its evolutionary landscape rather than evolutionary contemplation envelops the novels' lovers, Rachel and Terence, in a less self-conscious and socially prescribed atmosphere. A reconnection with and awareness of the primordial heightens their feelings and bodily sensations, but it paradoxically renders them less communicative, their thoughts "unintelligible." Rachel's descent into the jungle, her disappearance and ultimately her death, does not fulfill the conventions of romance; *Night and Day* grapples with the same issue, but this time Woolf engenders a resolution. Hite reads Woolf's extraction of the visionary body from the social body as a developed convention of representation to avoid the risk and exposure women are subjected to in the Edwardian or Victorian plot, where the woman is either married off or ruined, saved or exploited. "The social female body is a body at risk," and the visionary body is "an inspired solution to the problem of women's culturally sanctioned vulnerability. It is the body sealed off from social consequences, secure from interruption or invasion: a corporeal correlative of the room of one's own."¹²⁶ But the visionary capacities of Katharine also need to be explored in the context that Woolf's setting suggests and the evolutionary discourse implies. Evolution engages both the social and the visionary bodies. Bodies, as with formations of species, are never sealed off and enclosed. Evolutionary biology, unlike astrophysics, is a science rooted in sex and reproduction. When Ralph discusses the manner in which the plants are "endowed with sex," adapted "to live and beget life," the thought wakens in Katharine "echoes in all those remote

¹²⁵ *N&D* 280-282

¹²⁶ "Virginia Woolf's Two Bodies" 12.

fastnesses of her being where loneliness had brooded so long undisturbed.”¹²⁷ Julia Briggs notices that it is here where the “abstract and the actual” are combined, and the discovery releases Katharine “from the loneliness of her mind to an awareness of her body.”¹²⁸ The reader is meant to connect this scene to Katharine’s questioning, later, of why there should be “this perpetual disparity between the thought and the action, between the life of solitude and the life of society, this astonishing precipice on the one side of which the soul was active in broad daylight, on the other side of which it was contemplative and dark as night? Was it not possible to step from one to the other, erect, and without essential change? Was this not the chance he offered her...”¹²⁹ This is the new ideal, which Woolf attempts to establish between the contemplative and the social life of women. The rest of the novel is the struggle to marry the two prospects.

Ralph plays his part here; he is occupied with topical questions while Katharine muses among the vegetation. Katharine’s contemplation “of that other part of life where thought constructs a destiny which is independent of human beings” paradoxically opens her up to the prospect of entering into a relationship with Ralph. It is certainly a peculiar courtship that Woolf establishes between these two lovers of shared solitude. Ralph stimulates Katharine precisely because their personal interactions afford her the detachment necessary for intellectual reverie, a chance at impersonality rather than enforced intimacy (or worse, the engrossing trivialities of the conventional Hilbery social settings). He, too, is augmented by the relationship, in possession of his full faculties for the first time when with Katharine. The romance plot will not be Edwardian or Victorian, however. Ralph, in fact, is conscious of Katharine’s needs here in a way that no other character has been previously, least of all Katharine’s parents or her intended husband

¹²⁷ *N&D*, 281

¹²⁸ From Briggs’s “Introduction” to *Night and Day* (New York: Penguin, 1992) xxx.

¹²⁹ *Night and Day* 288.

William Rodney. Ralph's is the perspective that grants us insight into Katharine's visionary states of mind and body:

...he looked at her taking in one strange shape after another with the contemplative, considering gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions that lie beyond it. The far-away look entirely lacked self-consciousness.

Denham doubted whether she remembered his presence. He could recall himself, of course, by a word or a movement—but why? She was happier thus.¹³⁰

It is a small but significant courtesy that Ralph grants Katharine. By recognizing that a moment of solitude, of scientific contemplation, might be desirable for Katharine as well as a male intellectual, Ralph becomes desirable to Katharine. Still, she is so trained in the societal conventions of her feminine role that Ralph's silence actually checks hers: "Katharine had an uneasy sense that silence on her part was selfishness. It was selfish of her to continue, as she wished to do, a discussion of subjects not remotely connected with any human beings."¹³¹

Katharine is well aware that solitude, silence, a contemplation of one's own, is selfish if you are a woman; to be *unselfconscious* in this sense is to be selfish according to the conventions of the Hilberys' Victorian mores. Unselfconsciousness, the disappearance of self, is precisely what all of Woolf's evolutionary scenes provide: a relief from the *I* of Victorian authorities. This is not to say that Ralph is a perfect mate, or that he doesn't struggle with his selfish needs or preconceptions as opposed to Katharine's. Both of them must work through what it would mean to found a marriage upon freer terms, a life of the mind and of the body for both woman and man. Kew Gardens, a small cloistered patch of the natural world on display in the civilizing confines of the city, offers them this first glimpse of that possibility.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 282.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 282.

This brief but essential discourse on evolution provides Katharine the grander view, the expanse of vision that might realign the Victorian plot for its female heroine. In physics, Katharine had covertly cultivated faculties that went beyond her familial and societal role, but through contemplating evolution, the “vast external world” of sex and selection engages her in the “laws that ruled their endless variations.” While natural selection governs with detachment on a cosmic scale (just like her beloved mathematics), evolution physically as well as mentally liberates on the societal scale. It stands in contrast to the Victorian teatime drama, the “part of life which is conspicuously without order,” full of moods and wishes, likes and dislikes, the fluttering emotions of the moment. The long perspective that includes human beings, but that remains aloof and indifferent to human concerns as well, opens Katharine up to a past larger than the family drama and historical romance of the Hilberys. A future established on such terms could conceivably vary from what’s come before it. This marriage plot evolves to marry the social and visionary body.

✧Chapter Three✧

Tales of the Snail: Naturalist Perspective and Evolutionary Form in “Kew Gardens” and “The Mark on the Wall”

✧3.1: WOOLF’S NATURALIST VIEW OF KEW

How evolutionary history and setting pertain to Woolf’s breakthrough in narrative form and technique is incredibly involving. To review, Woolf’s first two novels plot their evolutionary courses, with *The Voyage Out* expeditioning to the jungles of South America and *Night and Day* venturing at crucial moments to the repositories of nature and natural history in the city. Sequentially, the two novels quite uncannily recapitulate the Darwinian narrative of voyaging naturalist come home to lengthy scientific contemplation, but with the severe limitations of women’s roles lived out under Victorian patriarchal structures.

Taken together, you have the 19th century correlative of promising women whose intellectual pursuits are thwarted by social expectations, akin to what *A Room of One’s Own* famously gives as “Shakespeare’s Sister”: here, you might say, are Darwin’s figurative sisters. Woolf’s narrative has evolved from her heroine doing the Darwinian thing available to her—a chaperoned, escorted trip into the primitive time and space of an Amazon village—to the Darwinian course of study and contemplation available to her in the social environs of her parents’ Victorian London. *Victorian*, because although both of these novels take place in the modern present of Virginia Woolf’s early twentieth century, they have not yet become Modern in narrative form or representation. Woolf retrospectively ascribes “that method of approach, Jacobs Room, Mrs. Dalloway etc,” which would define her as a Modernist, to the triptych of

“Kew Gardens,” “The Mark on the Wall,” and “An Unwritten Novel.”¹³² She gives special billing to “An Unwritten Novel,” a story pregnant with ideas, but it is the first two especially that mark a beginning because of their production one after the other in the summer of 1917, even as *Night and Day* was being written, and nearly three years before “An Unwritten Novel” was completed.¹³³ “Kew” and “Mark” are radically different in structure from anything Woolf had previously attempted. They are also radically Darwinian in their Modernity.

“Kew Gardens” and “The Mark on the Wall” are Woolf’s first narrative movements from evolutionary plot to evolutionary form. To begin with, “Kew”:¹³⁴ where Woolf’s protagonists had expressed their need to break free of conventions in *Night and Day*, “Kew Gardens” simply evades the conventions. It is useful, essential, to realize that the Kew Gardens scene of *Night and Day* has been transposed to her short story, with the major difference being the emphasis upon the narration itself. The novel’s descriptions of Katharine’s evolutionary contemplations while viewing Kew are now a direct *narrative transcription* in the short story. In *Night and Day*, Katharine absorbs Ralph’s peroration on trees and flowers, “bulbs and seeds... which adapted themselves by all manner of ingenious devices to live and beget life, and could be fashioned squat or tapering, flame-coloured or pale, pure or spotted, by processes which might reveal the secrets of human existence.”¹³⁵ The lesson on evolution sets in motion Katharine’s reverie, and we observe Ralph observing her, again, “taking in one strange shape after another with the contemplative, considering gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions that lie beyond it.”¹³⁶ We are told that Katharine is attracted to a “law that might be

¹³² *Letters* 4, 231.

¹³³ “An Unwritten Novel” was begun in January, 1920.

¹³⁴ “Mark,” most likely, was written first in order, as it was the first story Woolf published and typeset for The Hogarth Press in July of 1917. Katherine Mansfield mentions and flatters “Kew Gardens” in a letter of August 15, 1917, and a manuscript of “Kew” survives that is dated August 7, 1917. See Briggs, *An Inner Life*, 63-65. “Kew” was first published in 1919, illustrated with Vanessa Bell’s woodcuts, so it was likely revised and rewritten as well.

¹³⁵ *Night and Day* 281.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 282.

inscrutable but was certainly omnipotent...because she could find nothing like it in possession of human lives.” Because she was a woman in the “flower of youth,” she had had to consider “all that part of life which is conspicuously without order,” which Woolf suggests are the conventions of Victorian courtship and manner that have been divorced from any basis upon the “real,” implied here as the natural world understood through Darwinian theory. Katharine has been “forced to deny herself any contemplation of that other part of life,” the part that evolution reveals to her as a law not sanctioned by man or man’s divinities but by the processes that determine human existence. All of this, we are told, registers for Katharine and explains her trance-like state. In Woolf’s short story, Katharine’s exposition is already internalized, so that the narrative perspective embodies her meditative trance and projects it outward. “Kew Gardens” takes the actual form of a reverie on evolution, as if it were experienced by Katharine’s “considering gaze.” We read what a Katharine sees, even what a Katharine *feels*. What would it be to have the consciousness of a visionary body transposed as narrative? Woolf had been “stone breaking” for months, she remembered, but *Kew Gardens* is where her narrative broke ground.

What’s innovative, new in Woolf’s fiction, is how this “thought that constructs a destiny independent of human beings” is *mimetically configured* rather than told. Here, the setting itself partakes of, even at crucial moments replaces, the action of the narrative. Rather than plot, there is a plot of land—a single oval-shaped flowerbed in Kew Gardens that Woolf’s narrator observes with an unrelenting focus, a kind of visionary embodiment of how her Katharine or even her Rachel might experience it first person. We, the readers, are encamped in the narrative perspective of this outward gaze upon the flowers of Kew and the thoughts and sensations they induce. It anticipates her famous call to narrative liberty two years later in “Modern Novels”: “if one were free and could set down what one chose, there would be no plot, little probability,

and a vague general confusion....” A detached, observant perspective records what falls upon the eye, which “receives upon its surface a myriad impressions...”¹³⁷ Woolf attempts to capture what she would two years later call the “chief task” of the novelist, “to convey this incessantly varying spirit with whatever stress or sudden deviation it may display.”¹³⁸ The intriguing aspect of Woolf’s application of these principles is how provocatively the story suggests, “To what end?” For the moderns in “Modern Novels,” “it becomes apparent that the emphasis is upon something hitherto ignored or unstressed in that relation, a feeling, a point of view, suggesting a different and obscure outline of form incomprehensible to our predecessors.”¹³⁹ In its structure, “Kew Gardens” repudiates that “life is like” the conventional novel, but in doing so attempts to represent “what we might venture to call *life itself*.”¹⁴⁰ Woolf’s narrative holds the mirror up to nature, but it is not what one would ordinarily think of as *human nature* as the novelist had commonly represented it.

How, then, “Kew Gardens” is Darwinian in form begins with this shift from plot and character to the concerns of narrative perspective. It presents an outlook that might best be described as the naturalist’s perspective, or at the least an artistic rendering, as it were, of a naturalist’s perspective. By centering the flowerbed and creating a resolute, fixed narrative point of view, the act of observation in essence replaces the action of plot. There are no “characters,” in the literary sense of the term, acting out a predetermined course of events: rather, a human presence viewed by the narrator simply becomes part of a series of observations.

This is not to say that the human lives transpiring in “Kew Gardens” are *insignificant*. Indeed, the four groupings of humans are a shuffled, swiftly moving representation of life’s phases. Out of order, we see and hear a young couple at the onset of their sexual lives; a married

¹³⁷ “Modern Novels” (1919), 33

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

couple with children reminiscing about their past before each other and their progeny; a senile, old man speaking nonsense to the son who escorts and redirects him; and a pair of “elderly women of the lower class” grown old, one assumes, in service to the likes of these others. If “Kew Gardens” is a narrative exercise in close, focused observation, it is also an exercise in perceiving human relations on natural terms, shifting emphasis from a human adventure tale or marriage plot to a detached view of *all* relevant relations. This includes lover to lover, husband to wife, son to father, girlfriend to girlfriend; but not to the exclusion of sun to flower, flower to human, human to butterfly, or butterfly to flower. Nature from this vantage, in fact, is not this antagonistic other, which must be overcome or subjugated by human nature. The naturalist’s perspective, that this narrative creates, envisions the space of Kew Gardens as a locus of relatedness, where human thought and action are deeply interfused with the myriad interactions within this particular plot of land.

***3.2: THE KEW GARDENS OF NATURAL HISTORY**

And Kew signifies no ordinary plot of nature or botany. It is not arbitrary that Woolf brings Katharine and Ralph to the naturalistic setting of The Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew at the pivotal juncture of *Night and Day*. Nor is it happenstance that Woolf’s breakthrough short story shares the same space and bears the garden’s name as its title. The history of the actual Kew Gardens is itself a microcosm of how the natural sciences found a home through the expansion of the British Empire. Kew Gardens had become the repository of botanical specimens culled from most of the great British naval expeditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Joseph Banks, England’s first great botanist and voyaging naturalist, all but

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 35

¹⁴⁰ “Modern Novels, *Essays II*, 33. Emphasis mine.

created the scientific importance of the gardens when his friendship with King George III helped Banks transform Kew from the “pleasure gardens” of the monarchy to one of the most important botanical and research facilities in Europe.¹⁴¹ Banks had begun his vast botanical collection as the lead naturalist aboard the *Endeavour* expedition (1768-1771) to the South Seas under the legendary Captain James Cook. Banks returned home to immediate fame and was soon thereafter named president of The Royal Society, a position he held for more than forty years. Banks only added to the collection on subsequent voyages and then solicited specimens from every major expedition thereafter. Nobody did more to encourage and celebrate the blooming pastime of amateur botanists collecting and cultivating exotic specimens for their own gardens. Thirty new specimens of rhododendron from Asia, gathered on such an expedition, might spur the trend of planting them in the private gardens of England, but Banks was more interested in one of the great pastimes and pursuits of the century: Linnean classification and taxonomy. What was once a monarch’s retreat had become the most important botanical holding and research facility in the land.

This transition from royal garden to a research center open to the public for the study of botany should not be overlooked as a recurrent scene in Woolf’s fiction. It is not simply that Kew Gardens is a natural setting whereby Woolf might allude to the fruits of evolution in the city of London. When Woolf dubs the gardens “legendary” in *Night and Day*, she is evoking the playgrounds of princesses, the acquisitions of the British Empire, and one of the most historically important spaces of London, particularly its role in the evolution of evolutionary theory.¹⁴²

William Hooker became the first official director of Kew in 1841, when the gardens had fallen into disrepair and neglect after Banks’ death in 1820. Hooker expanded the design, scope, and

¹⁴¹ See <http://www.kew.org/heritage> for a more thorough account of Banks’ contributions to Kew and botany. Also see <http://www.nceas.ucsb.edu/~alroy/lefa/expeditions.html>.

influence of the gardens, including the accessibility of the gardens to the public. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Kew's herbarium alone housed 150,000 species culled from across the globe.¹⁴³ When Joseph Dalton Hooker (William's son) took over Kew Gardens, the only rival in England for botanical prominence was the British Museum's botanical collections, run by Richard Owens, a staunch opponent to Darwin's evolutionary theory. Most of the important botanical specimens under the British sun eventually moved to Kew, in large part due to the growing prestige that Joseph Dalton Hooker and his botanical publications enjoyed.

Of both biographical and biological interest is the fact that the most celebrated curator of Kew Gardens, the same Joseph Dalton Hooker, was a close friend and colleague of Charles Darwin, and the man to whom Darwin first revealed in 1844 that he was "almost convinced (quite contrary to opinion I started with) that species are not (it is like confessing a murder) immutable...I think I have found out (here's presumption!) the simple way by which species become exquisitely adapted to various ends."¹⁴⁴ Darwin honored Hooker and helped make his career by presenting Hooker with all his botanical specimens of the Galapagos Archipelago from the voyage of the *Beagle*, which are today still stored at Kew Gardens. Hooker remained one of the three or four staunchest defenders of Darwin's theory and maintained a close, lifelong friendship and correspondence with him. Hooker timed his publication of *The Botanical Specimens of the Himalayas* (1859) to bolster Darwin's treatise in *Origin of Species* and curtail some of the anticipated objections and rebuttals, making Hooker the first fellow scientist to publish a book-length study that offered support of Darwin's theory. He is one of the most referenced scientists in all of Darwin's writings, and vice-versa. This alliance alongside Kew's

¹⁴² Kew Gardens as it is now known was started in 1759 by Princess Augusta, the mother of King George III, on a nine-acre site around Kew Palace, but English royalty had been frequenting there much longer: <http://www.kew.org/heritage>.

¹⁴³ Endersby website of JD Hooker: <http://www.jdhooker.org.uk>. Owens was able to retain the British Museum collections, but by the turn of the century, Kew Gardens was the major botanical garden of the British Empire.

¹⁴⁴ 14 January 1844 Burkhardt and Smith 1987 2

governance and expansion under Hooker meant that the study of evolutionary botany had a garden of its own. By Joseph Hooker's death in 1911, Kew had become inextricably linked with the Hookers and the triumph of Darwin's theory.

Though Joseph Dalton Hooker was no fan of the sightseeing intrusion into the research done at Kew, its accessibility to the public made it one of the city's great attractions. Julia Briggs notes that "The Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew were just visible from the back windows of Hogarth House, and they had quickly become a favourite walk for the Woolfs."¹⁴⁵ There are multiple diary accounts of Woolf frequenting Kew Gardens while living nearby, including her strong desire to bring the orchid house and its "sinister reptiles that live in the tropical heat...into a novel."¹⁴⁶ Woolf, in essence, has her characters walk through the floral arrangements and botanical specimens culled from Darwin's voyage, a living, if cloistered, testimony to evolutionary theory. By the time of the Great War, when Woolf was frequenting Kew regularly and beginning to think of its implications for her fiction, Kew Gardens was much more than a pleasant destination. On display before her and the British public were quite literally the seeds of the empire and perhaps the greatest resource and dedicated arrangement of evolutionary theory available in England.

***3.3: IMPERSONALITY OF THE NATURALIST**

Another significant evolutionary backdrop to "Kew Gardens" is drawn from the literary scene. What I am calling the naturalist's perspective of "Kew Gardens" should be enlarged for the moment by contrasting it to the other narrative departures of Woolf's immediate predecessors and contemporaries. Certainly one way of generalizing Woolf's narrative detachment from the

¹⁴⁵ *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (Harcourt Brace, 2006) 65.

¹⁴⁶ *Diary I* 82.

lives of her “Kew Gardens” subjects is to see the same Modernist trend, even fetish, for Gustave Flaubert’s “impersonality of the artist.” Much as one principle of Modern literature derives from Flaubert’s ideal, Woolf is not Flaubert’s disciple. When Henry James read Flaubert’s posthumously published correspondence, James immediately saw the significance of Flaubert’s letter on “l’impersonnalité de l’oeuvre,” and translated it for the March, 1893 readers of Macmillan’s Magazine: “It’s one of my principles that one must never write down *one’s self*. The artist must be present in his work like God in creation, invisible and almighty, everywhere felt, but nowhere seen.”¹⁴⁷ James Joyce later fastened on to this dictum and transplanted it to Stephen Dedalus’s aesthetic principle in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. One must refine oneself out of the text, Joyce writes: “The mystery of esthetic like that of material creation is accomplished. The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.”¹⁴⁸ Woolf does echo Joyce and Flaubert almost directly when she herself writes that “the ‘book itself’ is not a form which you see, but emotion which you feel.”¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Woolf’s essay “On Rereading Novels”(1922) paraphrases Flaubert’s god of artistic creation who is “everywhere felt but nowhere seen” when she discusses his story “Un Coeur Simple.” She even compliments Flaubert by his own principle: “there is nothing to be seen; there is everything to be felt.”¹⁵⁰ It is in the same contemporary spirit that T. S. Eliot concludes “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1922) with the statement that “The emotion of art is impersonal.”

¹⁴⁷ “The Correspondence of Flaubert,” *Essays in London and Elsewhere*, 1893, 123. Flaubert’s letter reads, in French: “Madame Bovary n’a rien de vrai. C’est une histoire totalement inventée ; je n’y ai rien ni de mes sentiments, ni de mon existence. L’illusion (s’il y en a une) vient au contraire de l’impersonnalité de l’oeuvre. C’est un de mes principes, qu’il ne faut pas s’écrire. L’artiste doit être dans son oeuvre comme Dieu dans la création, invisible et tout puissant ; qu’on le sente partout, mais qu’on ne le voie pas.”

¹⁴⁸ *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Chester G. Anderson. New York: Penguin Books, 1977, p. 315

¹⁴⁹ from “On Rereading Novels” (1922), a review of Percy Lubbock’s *The Craft of Fiction*. Lubbock’s book champions the formal mastery of Flaubert and James over their predecessors. Lubbock gave Woolf much to consider and oppose in developing a design of her own.

¹⁵⁰ *Essays III*, 340.

This said, Flaubert's principle and Joyce's refinement of it (even Eliot's) are not Woolf's, and the difference rests upon the first side of their analogy. At stake is the whole question of omniscience, which for the author of fiction is narrative point of view. Instead of the God of creation as Woolf's methodological model, there is the evolutionary theory of Darwin. It must be emphasized that Woolf does not replace Flaubert's "god of creation" with Darwin. Rather, it is the theory itself and the example Darwin establishes in removing God and human centrality from the questions asked of nature. Woolf, on numerous occasions, criticizes Joyce for the "egotism" at the center of his formal accomplishment, so that the "impersonality" of the work of art paradoxically creates a deity out of the author to be worshipped at art's alter.¹⁵¹ Joyce's great ambition was indeed to replace scriptural authority with his own. "The dissolution of self" in Woolf's narrative experiments, beginning with "Kew Gardens," is the loss of both the *assumption* of human centrality and the ascension of the author as his own surrogate divinity.

Consider that a major coup Darwin orchestrates in *The Origin of Species* is the remarkable absence of humanity at the center of it. By studying the artificial selection of dogs and cows and pigeons, a human enterprise to be sure, Darwin allows his audience to infer that given how little time it has taken a wolf to become a poodle, the rock pigeon a carrier pigeon, think about what *natural selection* might accomplish given a vastly more expansive timescale. The Copernican revolution of Darwin, as Freud pointed out, was to remove man from the center of the universe, which on a biological scale meant removing humanity from the pinnacle of the earth's creation story. Perhaps the most brilliant narrative strategy Darwin employs in the composition of *The Origin of Species* is one of omission: never directly discussed is the origin of

¹⁵¹ This criticism of Joyce is complex and varied. Certainly one facet of Woolf's published and personal criticisms of Joyce stems from anxiety that Joyce was primary to her efforts in a similar vein. There is also the question of taste: Joyce's focus upon "indecenty" was not to her liking, but Woolf's larger argument against Joyce, even in her espoused appreciations of his accomplishment, centers on the question of "egotism," a writing confined ultimately by its being "centered in a self" ("Modern Novels").

humans. Knowing the impact of explicitly stating what was still nonetheless obvious through inference, Darwin left the full assault upon this most sacred of subjects to *The Descent of Man* some thirteen years later, when the premise of evolution itself had already found a large body of support. Even there, the pointed focus upon the evolution of man proves that man is not the point of evolution. Woolf's first disruption of formal convention, unlike a Flaubert or a Joyce or even a James, was to attempt the Darwinian revolution of not only removing humanity from the center of the story but from the creation story.

The strong, intervening narrative presence in "Kew" is neither omniscient nor first person—it is focused outward, upon the scene it observes and describes, but still retains the mediating authority to make inferences and even briefly enter or imagine the lives in observance. This includes human character, but in relation to and not in exclusion of the natural world and its other inhabitants. Woolf reinforces this Darwinian perspective by suggesting a form of natural kinship through description and metaphor, the language itself used to inform this meditation on evolution. The sketches and similes generate a near equivalence between the humans observed and the organic life observed. Likened to the insects that share the same space and time of day with them, Woolf's varied humans "straggled past the flower-bed with a curiously irregular movement not unlike that of the white and blue butterflies who crossed the turf in zig-zag flights from bed to bed."¹⁵² They are merely a part of this natural procession, attracted like butterflies to the "heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves" and dappled flowers—the flowers, in fact, are quite explicitly described in their own reproductive phase of pollination: "from the red, blue, or yellow gloom of the throat there emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end."¹⁵³ Their "voluminous" colors move and stir in the summer breeze, at least as sexualized

¹⁵² Qtd. From *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick. New York: Harcourt, 1989. pg. 90-95.

¹⁵³ *CSF*, 90

and alive as the humans who are passing sensations, overheard voices, and peripheral figures that, once past the narrative's spotlight upon the flowers, "diminished in size among the trees and looked half transparent."

It is with a sense of wonder that color forms upon the eyes of the observer and unconsciously draws in the humans who come to see the flowerings of July. The insect presence grows uncanny. The whole story resonates with a quivering, hovering manifestation of life's ephemerals, and most ephemeral of all are the itinerant humans. A married man remembers the fifteen years previous where a dragonfly circled around him and a former lover, whose refusal of him turned the unsettled presence of the dragonfly into a metaphor of love lost. For the old, infirm man whose objects of thought no longer settle with order in time or space, his son has to catch him by the sleeve and touch "a flower with the tip of his walking-stick in order to divert the old man's attention" from his flights of fancy.¹⁵⁴ Least assured of their place in the natural world are the young man and woman who embody "that season which precedes the prime of youth, the season before the smooth pink folds of the flower have burst their gummy case, when the wings of the butterfly, though fully grown, are motionless in the sun." Their conversation is "words with short wings for their heavy body of meaning, inadequate to carry them far and thus alighting awkwardly upon the very common objects that surrounded them."¹⁵⁵ If these human presences emerge only to flutter past the flowerbed with the rapidity of the butterfly, it is to modify their assumed position in nature; the narrative's impersonal description and careful employment of metaphor suggest an approximate equivalence between various lives within the boundaries of natural law, including the reality of mortality and the rapidity of life. Humanity's swift entrances and departures from this narrative are a departure from humanity's central

¹⁵⁴ *CSF*, 92.

¹⁵⁵ *CSF*, 94.

position in fiction; art imitates life considered from an evolutionary perspective, a butterfly's flight past the evolutionary gardens of time.

*3.4: TALE OF THE SNAIL

While what is said and done by humans in passing bears significance, it is no more significant than the more radical perspective created by Woolf's depiction of the garden snail. Hidden below the oval-shaped flowerbed and its protrusion of stalks is the sight and sometimes even the point of view of a snail. In fact, while the four vignettes of human activity pass by, the singular snail's presence remains central and centered in the flowerbed itself, returned to on three separate occasions. Interspersed between the quickened, flickering voices of the human beings who pass by with "with much the same irregular and aimless movement..." are these passages of the snail's lapsed progress. Unlike the humans, the snail "appeared to have a definite goal in front of it," if only to trespass the "arched tent of a dead leaf."¹⁵⁶ At first sighting, "the shell of a snail with its brown, circular veins" is only seen in its natural setting settled below the flowers. Then it moves, "very slightly in its shell," but with purpose over the "crumbs of loose earth."¹⁵⁷ The narrator imagines what the snail sees and senses in its microcosmic universe: "Brown cliffs with deep green lakes in the hollows, flat, blade-like trees that waved from root to tip, round boulders of grey stone, vast crumpled surfaces of a thin crackling texture."¹⁵⁸ Here, reimagined from the sublime perspective of the snail, are soil, dewdrops, stalks of flowers, pebbles, and leaves.

¹⁵⁶ *CSF*, 92

¹⁵⁷ *CSF*, 90-91

¹⁵⁸ *CSF*, 92.

Margot Norris has traced one aspect of Darwin's influence in Modern literature through what she dubs a "biocentric art" that opposes the ubiquitous anthropomorphism of literature.¹⁵⁹ Woolf is not included in her study, but this story does make gestures away from anthropocentric comparisons of human to animal, where the animal edifies only on human terms. While Woolf's description of the snail is anthropocentric in the sense that it "humanizes" the perspective of the snail (by sharing its perspective with the reader's), the opposing dimension of the human is in fact *dehumanized*. Kew's human visitors meander haphazardly past the flowers, but the snail embodies a directed, purposeful existence. It must choose the right path before it, becoming aware of the obstacles to overcome (or underlie) in its naturalist pilgrimage through Kew Gardens.

The garden indeed quivers with lifeforms that have decidedly and obviously not evolved for human or divine purposes. While the snail's slow, deliberate movements are interludes of sorts between the human processions, the human pageantry to a larger degree revolves around the narrative focus on the snail. Woolf, after all, places the snail squarely in the middle of the flowerbed that is the focal point of the story. Juxtaposing the snail and the humans—and in fact marginalizing human centrality through the story's narrative perspective—creates a naturalism so unconventional that it *feels unnatural*—whereas nature is precisely the point. This is how Katharine Hilbery's thoughts *become* "Kew Gardens." The snail's presence immediately registers her Kew Gardens contemplation in *Night and Day* of a destiny independent of human beings, that "recks so little of the happiness, of the marriages or deaths of individuals."¹⁶⁰ It tethers the "irregular, aimless" perambulations of the humans, who "dissolved in the green-blue atmosphere" of Kew. It reimagines Katharine's vision of how "The very trees and the green

¹⁵⁹ *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*. See in particular her concluding chapter, "The Biocentric Tradition in Context."

¹⁶⁰ *Night and Day*, 281-2.

merging into blue distance became symbols of the vast external world....”¹⁶¹ Here, the snail, the smallest and least conspicuous attendant of Kew Gardens, carries on its back the story’s intimate extension of evolutionary meaning.

This becomes clear in the final, most curious movement of the story, when the narrative gradually lifts its perspective to see a world larger than the flowerbed. The metaphors of nature, so carefully chosen and crafted to equate humans to the botanical and organic life of Kew Gardens, are inverted. Now, natural movements seem humanly, even artificially constructed:

How hot it was! So hot that even the thrush chose to hop, like a mechanical bird, in the shadow of the flowers...; instead of rambling vaguely the white butterflies danced one above another, making with their white shifting flakes the outline of a shattered marble column...and in the drone of the aeroplane the voice of the summer sky murmured its fierce soul. (95)

Of a sudden the scene grows composed; the heat producing more methodical, limited movement; the birds suggesting human mechanism; and the butterflies, not erratic in their movements like the human beings but linear, even architectural like the ruins of a Greek column. The most uncanny metaphorical shift occurs when the drone of the bee we are expecting in the summer garden is instead the “drone of the aeroplane,” its sound and mechanisms surprisingly representative of the “fierce soul” of the summer sky.¹⁶² The terms of comparison have completely reversed courses, it seems, and a dehumanized scene from nature begins to sound like the intrusion of industrialized London. As Woolf spirals out of the oval flowergarden, the city itself is seen and heard in its daily rotations.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Woolf could, in fact, be echoing the famous passage in Maurice Maeterlinck’s *The Life of Bee* (1901), Chapter 21 on “The Swarm;” where he describes bees as “the soul of the summer, the clock whose dial records the moments of plenty.” The word “drone” derives from the drone bee, the male non-working bee. Its association with the sound of the bee, as catalogued in the OED, is later, but in common usage by the 16th century.

These volutions, in fact, predominate:

All the time the motor omnibuses were turning their wheels and changing their gear; like a vast nest of Chinese boxes all of wrought steel turning ceaselessly one within another the city murmured; on the top of which the voices cried aloud and the petals of myriads of flowers flashed their colours into the air. (95)

Nature at this remove appears not simply mechanical but mechanistic, a vision not unlike the introductory metaphor of the commonweal spun by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*:

NATURE (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within, why may we not say that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificial life?¹⁶³

In Hobbes, regardless of how nasty, brutish, and short living is, capitalized Nature is still God-made, and the art of man the imitation of this original universe of automata put in motion by the chief Artificier. From the Hobbesian perspective, that artificial animal is indeed the springs and wheels of the commonwealth:

For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the Artificer? Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE (in Latin, CIVITAS).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ *Leviathan* (1651), "Introduction."

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

No doubt, Woolf's curious collection of concluding images conveys a mechanistic universe, replicated in the motions of birds and butterflies as in the mechanics of industrialization, but the associations pick up more than Hobbes, the divine watch of William Paley, or other philosophies of a mechanistic bent. When Woolf's wheels of London spiral out of Kew Gardens, the mechanics of the story are still Darwinian. The artificier here is not God but evolution and the attendant evolutionary mechanisms that time affords adaptation by means of natural selection. Chinese boxes, one of the favorite imported curios of the late 19th and early 20th century, open up one inside the other so that the smallest, most precious of them replicates the largest and originates the pattern—hence, its common literary usage as a metaphor for the metafictional story within the story or play within the play. That they are “a vast nest” only enhances Woolf's vision of artifice and nature, nature and art. Here is where the final turns of phrase evocatively bind the structure of the story to its Darwinian narrative, subtly connecting the smallest volute at the center of the story to the grand mechanisms of time and evolution.

The snail, of course—that has inhabited the center of the oval flowerbed, whose volute shape, not to mention marine classification, originates and duplicates the volutions of geometry, architecture and art—houses in its slowly but finely turning structure the structure of the story. From it the story emanates. The word *volute*, in its etymology and derivations, carries not only the root of *evolution* but the evolution of its meaning. Whether the volute of the Ionic order of column, later incorporated into Corinthian and composite capitals, was inspired by the volutions of the snail; or the ovule common to the Greek clover; or the volute leaves of the Egyptian lotus; or the volute of a ram's horn; or simply the abstractions of geometry, that spiraling scroll shape

found in nature is replicated in classical architecture.¹⁶⁵ Euclid's *Elements* also houses the mathematics behind the shape that Renaissance architects and artists brought back into favor in the 1500s.¹⁶⁶ Was it in preparation for writing the character of Katharine in *Night and Day*, Woolf's closeted amateur mathematician, that Woolf came upon the symbolic resonance of spirals, the involutes and evolutes of geometry? Katharine has her *Night and Day* visions in "algebraic symbols," and when at Kew the botanical life became to her "symbols of the vast external world..."¹⁶⁷ Perhaps it was through Bertrand Russell, or Roger Fry's appreciation for geometric forms in art, or simply her formative tour of Greece a decade earlier.¹⁶⁸

The most likely of influences, which incorporates something akin to all of the above, is D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's groundbreaking, seminal work *On Growth and Form* (1917), the first edition published and disseminated right when Woolf was writing "Kew Gardens," "The Mark on the Wall," and *Night and Day*. Thompson is another Cambridge Apostle who maintained a close association with Alfred North Whitehead and company, and his radical approach to evolution and form were well known among Woolf's intellectual circles.¹⁶⁹ Aspects of Thompson's premise in *On Growth and Form* resonate throughout Woolf's descriptions in "Kew" and elsewhere:

The waves of the sea, the little ripples on the shore, the sweeping curve of the sandy bay between the headlands...all these are so many riddles of form, so many

¹⁶⁵ See, for instance, the many speculations upon the origin of the volute in architecture in *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building: Biographical, Historical, and Descriptive*, by Russell Sturgis (London: Macmillan, 1905) 303. Vitruvius famously laid out the orders of classical architecture that have been in common vernacular usage since the Renaissance.

¹⁶⁶ For an interesting and thorough account of this, see Denise Andrey and Mirko Galli, "Geometric Methods of the 1500s for Laying Out the Ionic Volute" *Nexus Network Journal*, Birkhäuser Basel, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2004, 31-48. They study the methods of Sebastiano Serlio, Giuseppe Salviati and Philandrier for laying out the Ionic volute as it was described by Vitruvius. Salviati in particular used Euclid's *Elements* in an attempt to reconcile the shape to its geometric principles (what is often called the Archimedean Spiral).

¹⁶⁷ *Night and Day*, 282.

¹⁶⁸ This would certainly bolster Ann Banfield's assertions that much of Woolf's aesthetics derives from the philosophical studies of Bertrand Russell. Woolf visited Greece in 1906 with her sister Vanessa and her brother Thoby. More on this to come.

¹⁶⁹ Whitehead and Thompson were in fact very close friends going back to their undergraduate years at Cambridge; see C. D. Broad's eulogy: "Alfred North Whitehead (1863-1947)" *Mind*, Vol. 57, No. 226 (Apr., 1948), pp. 139-145.

problems of morphology...the physicist can more or less easily read and adequately solve...by reference to their antecedent phenomena, in the material system of mechanical forces to which they belong.... Nor is it otherwise with the material forms of living things. Cell and tissue, shell and bone, leaf and flower, are so many portions of matter, and it is in obedience to the laws of physics that their particles have been moved, moulded and conformed.”¹⁷⁰

Thinking that the vogue of evolutionary theory had turned the study of biological form (morphology) into a search for descent and teleology, Thompson searches instead for the mathematical principles and equations applicable to organic and inorganic matter alike:

...mechanism and teleology are interwoven together, and we must not cleave to the one nor despise the other; for their union is rooted in the very nature of totality.... In our own day the philosopher neither minimizes nor unduly magnifies the mechanical aspect of the Cosmos; nor need the naturalist either exaggerate or belittle the mechanical phenomena which are profoundly associated with Life, and inseparable from our understanding of Growth and Form.¹⁷¹

If this sounds like a return to a Cartesian or even more precisely a Platonic or Pythagorean approach to solving the riddles of existence, it should.

Thompson does not conceal that his emphasis is upon mathematics *as* a determination of form—“problems of form are in the first instance mathematical problems”—¹⁷²and his focus could only emanate from a mind as steeped in classical studies as it was in natural history. A polymath among a generation of polymaths, Thompson’s publications on the classics, including a definitive translation of Aristotle’s *Historia Animalium* and a glossary of ancient Greek birds

¹⁷⁰ *On Growth and Form*, D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, ed. by John Tyler Bonner. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 7

and fish, rival his work in zoology and mathematics. As Stephen Jay Gould succinctly puts it, “D’Arcy Thompson was a Greek mathematician with 20th century material and insights,”¹⁷³ and *On Growth and Form* is a synthesis of these two pursuits. Indeed, Thompson aligns his colossal study to the idea (“as old as Plato, as old as Pythagorus,”) commonly dubbed Plato’s aphorism: “the book of Nature is written in the characters of Geometry.”¹⁷⁴

This assertion is why Gould sees not Aristotle, though Aristotle was the classical naturalist Thompson most wrote about, but Plato as the intellectual force behind *On Growth and Form*. The math is difficult but the geometric shapes elegant and so simple to recreate that all you need is a string wound about an oval or a circular point, or a close, considered gaze at the shell of a snail: “The names *evolute* and *involute* allude to the simplest way of demonstrating the curves: the end of a stretched thread unwound from a fixed point on the evolute will trace one of its involutes.”¹⁷⁵ The end of the taut string that unwinds from¹⁷⁶ the “eye” or center of the volute forms its involute. Conversely, the curvature that envelops the involute, the original curve, is the evolute. The most famous and discussed geometric evolute of the early twentieth century, the one most replicated, was the evolute of the oval, whose intersecting lines form a four-pointed diamond, dubbed as a consequence the “four-vertex theorem.”¹⁷⁷ Diagrammed, it bears an uncanny resemblance:

¹⁷¹ *On Growth and Form*, 5.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 7

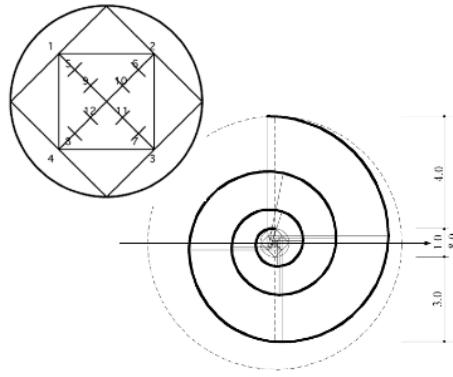
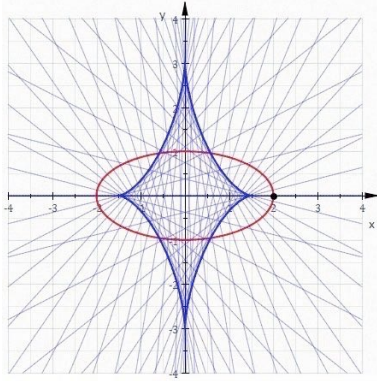
¹⁷³ “D’Arcy Thompson and the Science of Form,” *New Literary History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Form and its Alternatives (Winter, 1971), pp. 229-258.

¹⁷⁴ *On Growth and Form*, 269.

¹⁷⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, “Evolute,” Online Edition March 2009.

¹⁷⁶ Illustration taken from <http://curvebank.calstatela.edu/index/involutecircle.jpg>

¹⁷⁷ Syamadas Mukhopadhyaya and then Alfred Knesler proved the mathematical theorem in 1909 and 1912 respectively.



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In Woolf's story, the four human groupings make their turn past the oval flowerbed—and are enveloped “in layer after layer” as they pass through. By instinct, by adaptive mechanism long in the making, do any of the variety of snails house themselves in either the geometry of the Archimedean or Cartesian logarithmic spiral.¹⁷⁹ So too does Woolf's embedded snail. The circle that begins the snail shell is the evolute, the origin of its involutions. The gear wheels of the city make their own analogous involutions. The spinning propellers of the aeroplane that sound the “fierce soul” of the summer in Woolf's story, the turning wheel and changing gears of the motor omnibuses, are busy employing the same mathematical intricacies at work in the slow involution of the snail, but in this manifestation to maximize contact points of gear teeth. Where the gears meet is the involute of the circle. The mechanisms of the volute, in essence, turn the city of London. Woolf's meditative abstraction on evolution indeed replicates itself like a vast nest of Chinese boxes ceaselessly turning. From that minute, diminutive spiraling organism at the center the whole story unfolds, unrolls its scroll, which was the original meaning of evolving before it became Darwin's evolving origins.

¹⁷⁸ The evolute of an oval: “Thus one couple after another with much the same irregular and aimless movement passed the flower-bed and were enveloped...”(95). Illustration from <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/EllipseEvolute.html>. This second volute by Venetian painter Giuseppe Salviati, published in 1552, and used to recreate the Ionic volutes of Greek architecture. Here, illustrated by Denise Audrey and Mirko Galli in their study, “Geometric Methods of the 1500s for Laying Out the Ionic Volute” (36).

¹⁷⁹ Descartes first described the mathematical properties of the logarithmic spiral, but it was Jacob Bernoulli who studied its properties extensively, fascinated by the maintenance of shape while ever increasing in size: thus, he coined the term *Spira mirabilis*.

While the intricacies of Woolf's knowledge and research into the evolutions and involutions of her story's structure remain admittedly speculative in nature, the usage and association of the story's volutions with the volutions of the snail do not. In *Jacob's Room*, the novel Woolf herself envisioned as growing out of "Kew Gardens" et al., Woolf replicates this image at the end of "Kew" and expands upon it:

...and if there is such a thing as a shell secreted by man to fit man himself here we find it, on the banks of the Thames, where the great streets join and St. Paul's Cathedral, like the volute on the top of the snail shell, finishes it off. Jacob, getting off his omnibus, loitered up the steps, consulted his watch, and finally made up his mind to go in.¹⁸⁰

Woolf likens Christopher Wren's famous dome atop St. Paul's to the volute of the snail shell, and imagines the city streets and the people it houses as spiraling out of the involution of the cathedral, "the shell secreted by man."¹⁸¹ This, indeed, was precisely what Christopher Wren had in mind when he conceived the dome of St. Paul's, as Thompson reviews with his readers when looking at "time-elements" in nature that generate the growth and determine the form of spirals: "In short, it is the shell which curves the snail, and not the snail which curves the shell....Nay more, we may go back...and find Sir Christopher Wren contemplating the architecture of a snail-shell, and finding in it the logarithmic spiral....Wren not only conceived the spiral shell to be a sort of cone or pyramid coiled round a vertical axis, but also saw that on the magnitude of the angle of the spire depended the specific form of the shell."¹⁸² Woolf, then,

¹⁸⁰ 65.

¹⁸¹ Woolf also describes how she wrote *Mrs. Dalloway* "as the oyster starts or the snail to secrete a house for itself. And this it did without any conscious direction...it was necessary to write the book first and to invent a theory afterwards." ("Introduction" to *Mrs. Dalloway*," *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*, ed. by Francine Prose, New York: Harcourt, 2004, pg. 12). In *The Waves*, Woolf inverts the simile so that the first appearance of a snail in the interludes of that novel has a "snail shell rising in the grass like a grey cathedral, a swelling building burnt with dark rings..." (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959) 74.

¹⁸² *Growth and Form*, 187-189.

extends the organic architecture of the shell to the shell secreted by man in the growth and formation of the city. The shapeliness of the metaphor is repeated in the arbitrary figures riding atop the omnibuses turning in traffic, all of them and their pasts “shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart. One of them “took the chance to swing down the staircase,...and so dodging a zigzag course between the wheels...and was soon out of sight—for ever.”¹⁸³

Here again is that individual life zigzagging past the narrator and just as soon gone. The “forevers” accumulate: Inside St. Paul’s, the organ “for ever” chants to the white marble ghosts, the sounds “for ever requiem—repose,” and even the sewers beneath it that pour out “for ever conveyed them this way and that.” Like the “Chinese boxes” simile in “Kew,” the scene is a *mise en abyme*. The narrative completely detaches itself from a personal view of the city, and instead observes the patterned integrity of it, as if the shape of human history viewed from a distance were the shape of London viewed from above and nearly eternally present: “Home they went. The grey church spires received them; ...One behind another, round or pointed, piercing the sky or massing themselves, like sailing ships, like granite cliffs, spires and offices, wharves and factories crowd the bank; eternally the pilgrims trudge.”¹⁸⁴ To follow a day in Jacob’s young adult life is to see every other life participating and in relation. The naturalist perspective that Woolf duplicates here observes a phase in life, the present moment as an era or period rather than an individual perspective. The narrator must take it in collectively, systematically: “In short, the observer is choked with observations. Only to prevent us from being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself.”¹⁸⁵ (68-69). From the volute of St. Paul’s to the winding streets that lead to wharves and arches and homes and offices, the “spires received them....The moulds are filled

¹⁸³ *Jacob’s Room*, 64-65.

¹⁸⁴ 67.

nightly.”¹⁸⁶ The mechanisms of the city are shaped by human nature, which is no more or no less natural than the shell secreted by the snail or any other natural course of evolution.

*3.5: TALES OF THE SNAIL

There is another turn the snail makes in the summer of 1917, when it retracts back into its shell in “The Mark on the Wall.” The snail moves from the public garden into the private space of a house’s interior, and the perspective is conspicuously inverted. Where “Kew” focuses precisely on the external, what moves past the observant eye of the narrator, “The Mark on the Wall” moves inside not just an old house but the interior space of the narrator’s thoughts. The third-person “naturalistic” narration of “Kew” reverses course in the first-person narration of “The Mark on the Wall,” wherein the narrator does not speak but thinks (until the emergent “Yes?” at the very end). Call it an interior or narrated monologue or stream of consciousness narrative or any other imprecise critical catchphrase—this is Woolf’s first complete foray into this interior region of Modernist prose. As an object of thought, the snail instead elicits the subjectivity of thought. The narrative focuses upon this splotch of seeming insignificance, which refracts like a prism the light of so many thoughts shot through it by the perceiving narrator.

Woolf withholds the fact that the “mark” is a snail until the final sentence of the story, the snail identified by the husband who comes in the room and interrupts the narrator’s reveries. *What* the mark is seems arbitrary enough. In fact, her narrator’s inability to identify it permits the reveries that form the premise of the story. “How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object,” the narrator muses,

¹⁸⁵ *JR*, 68-9

¹⁸⁶ *JR*, 66-69

lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it... If that mark was made by a nail, it can't have been for a picture, it must have been for a miniature—the miniature of a lady with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks, and lips like red carnations. A fraud, of course, for the people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way—an old picture for an old room. That is the sort of people they were—very interesting people...

The mark, one might surmise, could have been anything, as the whole point is to let the mark's obscurity light up the myriad obscurities of thought that the mind entertains when given an uninhabited room and time to internally wander. Identification seems utterly beside the point: "And if I were to get up at this very moment and ascertain that the mark on the wall is really—what shall we say?—the head of a gigantic old nail, driven in two hundred years ago... what should I gain?—Knowledge?... And what is knowledge?" The objectivity of naming as *knowing* the object, in other words, is in question, and the accent falls differently when fiction "looks within" rather the focusing upon the "solidity" of what Woolf deems "the crudity and coarseness" of "materialist" fiction.¹⁸⁷

Woolf's "incessant shower" of consciousness, then, this internal stream of "myriad impressions," seems to be a random exercise in associational thought, but there is a point, a target to Woolf's mark; the snail is not an arbitrary, dismissive afterthought. Perhaps the most obvious volute Woolf traces in her two stories derives from her readings of Thomas DeQuincey, who remained one of her perennial favorites and was formative in Woolf's thinking on the possibilities of prose structure.¹⁸⁸ Woolf was particularly attracted to a quality in DeQuincey's

¹⁸⁷ Again, I allude to "Modern Novels" of 1919, *E2*, 33-34.

¹⁸⁸ Virginia Woolf wrote three essays specifically on Thomas DeQuincey: "The English Mail Coach" (1906) was one of her earliest and longest essays, of course on DeQuincey's essay by that title. "Impassioned Prose" was 1926, and one of her best critical essays, essential to read in relation to *To the Lighthouse* (some of the notes for and writing of the essay are actually found in her TTL manuscript). The essay was one of her personal favorites. "DeQuincey's Autobiography" (1932), her last on him, first

autobiographical writing that transgresses the boundaries between poetry and prose, the quality of his work that composes scenes that “have the strange power of growing in our minds, so that it is always a surprise to come upon them again and see what, in the interval, our minds have done to alter and expand.” Rather than facts, of which DeQuincey writes “scarcely anything,” or truth (“never for its truth”), Woolf instead appreciates the qualities in him that “are descriptions of states of mind in which, often, time is miraculously prolonged and space miraculously expanded.”¹⁸⁹ In *Suspiria de Profundis*, DeQuincey has his own word for these states of mind—*involute*s—and Woolf generously quotes the entire passage in the concluding section of her essay “Dequincey’s Autobiography”:

And, recollecting it, I am struck with the truth, that far more of our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of *CONCRETE* objects, pass to us as *INVOLUTES* (if I may coin that word) in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled, than ever reach us *DIRECTLY* and in their own abstract shapes. . . . (emphasis his and Woolf’s)¹⁹⁰

Woolf’s focus upon a perceiving and mediating consciousness *as the narrative itself* indeed creates an involute description of the state of mind DeQuincey here defines. The mark is indubitably a concrete object on the wall, but the labyrinthine assembly of thoughts and sensations that pass through the narrator prevent any direct experience of the object in its own abstract shape. Conscious experience is in this sense an involute, incapable of being unraveled, and the seeming inconsequence of the mark being a snail instead reveals Woolf’s whimsical

published in *The Second Common Reader*, considers all his writing as autobiographical, and praises his ability to suggest an emotion rather than state it through the writing itself that builds up wave upon wave until it becomes complete. DeQuincey is also discussed in Woolf’s essay “On Being Ill” as one of the few writers who relates literature to the body, particularly sickness, rather than a literature that only maintains that its concern is with the mind. I agree with Hermione Lee, Andrew McNeillie, and others that he is an indispensable resource for Woolf, as important as a Walter Pater.

¹⁸⁹ “Impassioned Prose,” *Selected Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by David Bradshaw (New York: Oxford UP, 2008) 60-61.

¹⁹⁰ Qtd in *The Second Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, 1932) 138.

usage of the very mark that evokes so many involutes. The mark on the wall is after all a volute, a life-form whose shell is secreted by its own marked, signature involutions.

The second passage that Woolf quotes from DeQuincey, fused to the first with an ellipsis, further suggests the structure and idea behind “The Mark on the Wall” and indeed “Kew Gardens.” Woolf’s ellipsis leaves out an extensive passage in *Suspiria de Profundis* because the two abstract thoughts that border it, that serve as book-ends to it, are as philosophically acute about subjective experience and consciousness as any passage in William James or Edmund Husserl:¹⁹¹

Man is doubtless *ONE* by some subtle *NEXUS*, some system of links, that we cannot perceive, extending from the new-born infant to the superannuated dotard: but, as regards many affections and passions incident to his nature at different stages, he is *NOT* one, but an intermitting creature, ending and beginning anew; the unity of man, in this respect, is co-extensive only with the particular stage to which the passion belongs. (emphasis his and Woolf’s)¹⁹²

Once “The Mark on the Wall” is paired up and read alongside “Kew Gardens,”¹⁹³ a greater pattern emerges. The narrative of “Kew” takes a larger, more detached view of humanity, which is indeed *one* by some subtle nexus, some system of links that we cannot perceive, as in the system of linked beings turning in the volutions of “Kew Gardens,” extending from the young to the old. They are also the “intermitting creature” and co-extensive from the vantage the narrator creates of the oval flowerbed. With “The Mark on the Wall” and the narrative turning inward

¹⁹¹ The section Woolf excises between the two passages is interestingly enough on the loss of DeQuincey’s sister Elizabeth, on the arresting power of grief but also the creativity of it. While not relevant here, the space left out, the absence, is an important place to look for DeQuincey in Woolf. Certainly Woolf would be attracted to his writings on the loss and memory of parent and sibling, made more involute by DeQuincey also being one of Julia Stephen’s favorite authors.

¹⁹² *CR2*, 138. Woolf quotes a few more sentences on revisiting childhood memories.

¹⁹³ Indeed, this seems to be Woolf’s intention not just because she wrote the two stories successively but because she pairs them together at the very end of her first published collection of short stories *Monday or Tuesday*.

and becoming singular, the *one* is oneself, the narrator herself, but her thoughts vary so randomly and aimlessly that the self does in essence end and begin anew with each new paragraph.

Indeed, one of her passing thoughts captures the narrative pursuit underway: “And the novelists in the future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories...”¹⁹⁴ Woolf’s two tales of the snail offer the vision of Woolf’s future designs, “Kew” the evolutions and “Mark” the involutions of thought. Rather than move her stories through their plots, Woolf plots two distinct movements in narrative structure.

***3.6: FROM EVOLUTIONS TO INVOLUTIONS OF TIME AND NARRATIVE**

Implicit in both of these stories is how Woolf’s experimentation with narrative form, both externalized and internalized in perspective, must reconfigure at once how the narrators experience time, and then how time is narrated. This is where the temporal dimensions of Darwin’s evolutionary theory most directly impact the shape Woolf’s stories take. “Kew Gardens” sees the natural world inhumanly to develop a sense of a larger pattern at work. It is a sketch of the dizzy present, with all of the present moment’s lives in procession, but observed with a studied naturalistic detachment that records every impression, with characterization limited to the span of time each person takes to cross the path before the oval flowerbed. Without developing her characters, the narrator quickly relates how each subject’s thoughts pertain to their perambulations past the flowerbed. The narrative studies only what might be immediately deduced from the appearance, speech, and behavior of the passersby in the time that it takes them to pass by.

¹⁹⁴ *CSF*, 85-6

Structurally, the interludes of the snail alter the perspective of Woolf's narration and afford a vision of life, including human life, at the level of natural history. But they also alter the tempo of the narrative and offer the starkest, most explicit contrast to the ephemeral presence of humanity in the story. The time of evolution is indeed embodied in the snail, perhaps the greatest insight that Woolf's "Kew Gardens" affords. The whole story is awash in movement, with the stillest point, the most gradual direction of movement, belonging to the snail. Its presence represents a temporal process external to human will, an expanded time which slows existence to a snail's pace that has been in existence in all organic forms for millions of years. Vegetative life and its unselfconscious existence are given a place entirely outside of a Katharine Hilbery's contemplation or any characters' thoughts and sensations, taking on a life of its own in the narrative, as it were. The scale of the snail is the scale of evolution. Its slow, methodical, ponderously limited vision becomes the grand vision of nature, the mechanics of its structure a mimetic configuration of evolutionary mechanism.

In this manner, Woolf comes to represent her two conceptions of time in narrative, what Paul Ricoeur so presciently described as "monumental" (cosmic) time and "lived" (phenomenological) time in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In "Kew Gardens," the butterfly's flight of humanity, the rapidity with which her human groupings speed past the garden, is Woolf's configuration of the time of living. Conversely, the representation of the snail is the grand design of evolution; the narrative's temporal configuration slows down to the pace and movement of a snail on a microcosmic scale that then projects the vast mechanism of time and evolution "turning ceaselessly" on the largest scale. In Ricoeur's parlance, borrowed from the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, this is the cosmic dimension of time. But with Woolf, this is also the time of evolution, and it exists independently of our awareness or apperception of it.

Ricoeur comes to understand the essential relation between time and narrative by how a narrative plots or configures its temporal course and becomes human as it temporalizes. The great fissure in Woolf, indeed in Ricoeur's entire analysis of Modern fiction, is the discordance between human time and cosmic time as her characters come to experience it and her novel comes to configure it. But here, in this early, formative example is the overarching aporia created by representing human time on an evolutionary scale, what Ricoeur later on defines as the incommensurability between human time and the time of nature. Ricoeur's great task is to reconcile the Augustinian discordance (between the instant and eternity) with the Aristotelian discordance between *muthos* and *mimesis*. Woolf has already thought through these temporal categories and translated them to the two times of Darwin, evident in all of Darwin's major works and beautifully rendered by Adam Gopnik:

In Darwin's work, time moves at two speeds: there is the vast abyss of time in which generations change and animals mutate and evolve; and then there is the gnat's-breath, hummingbird-heart time of creaturely existence, where our children are born and grow and, sometimes, die before us... The space between the tiny but heartfelt time of human life and the limitless time of Nature became Darwin's implicit subject.... The human challenge that Darwin felt, and that his work still presents, is to see both times truly—not to attempt to humanize deep time, or to dismiss quick time, but to make enough of both without overlooking either.¹⁹⁵

Woolf's radical perspective in "Kew Gardens" is to give the "gnat's breath" of creaturely existence as human time, to see the life of the human figures as relatively insignificant and aimless—"so quick, so quick"—as they flutter through the narrative. There is, however, no

¹⁹⁵ "Rewriting Nature," *New Yorker*, October 23, 2006, p. 59. Gopnik has substantially revised this essay and included it as a chapter in his book on Lincoln and Darwin entitled *Angels and Ages* (2009).

gesture towards eternity. The stillest point still moves. The deep time of Darwin is embedded there among the roots of her story, attempting to circumnavigate a dead leaf.

This is why the snail's presence in "The Mark on the Wall" is of the utmost significance. Whereas the small scale of evolution recapitulates the large mechanisms of evolution in "Kew," the spiral reverses course and turns the configurations of time inward in "The Mark on the Wall." By moving from "Kew's" external, evolutionary view of time to "Mark's" internal, phenomenological view of human time, the two times of Darwin are inverted. Like "Kew Gardens," the snail in "The Mark on the Wall" is the stillest point, but upon it thought is projected at the speed of consciousness. The original dynamic that secreted the external shell, creating its history like the chambers of a nautilus, now houses the past in the present; allowing an inward turn that "revisits by glimpses," to use DeQuincey's phrase for the involute of memory and time. The ponderously slow movement of the snail creates a *nearly* still life that occupies the narrator's consciousness. Its presence playfully questions the object of narration, which is not an inanimate object of thought or an abstract thought but a mobile, oozing, living, evolving organism. As the narrator's reveries attempt to fix a date and a beginning to the mark, the internal flow of her consciousness moves rapidly and freely over an associational sequence of thought, even as the momentary thoughts comment upon the rapidity of thought and life, likening it among other things to "being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour" (84). The ceaseless churning and turning of time, what the narrative describes as "the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so haphazard,"¹⁹⁶ is just as quickly and as haphazardly recalled.

And yet, this flight of the mind that is Woolf's narrated consciousness still traverses vast stretches of time, and the instantaneousness of thought is counterpoised by the temporal expanse

¹⁹⁶ This also recalls Walter Pater's "Conclusion" in the *Renaissance* and Herbert Spencer's philosophy, both of which will be discussed in an ensuing chapter.

of vision. The narrative form and the content it narrates stretch a few moments of thought through several pages and several ages. It is uncanny how often these flights of the mind turn towards the mind's own bodily descent and origins. Within each involution of thought, evolution is immanent. Woolf's figure muses, "what an accidental affair this living is after all our civilization," a quick attribution to the happenstance of human history and prehistory. Woolf's narrator then moves in no pre-existing order from the dust that covered Troy and the mantelpiece to seeds sown in the reign of Charles the First, to barrows on the South downs of prehistoric man to learned men who are "descendants of witches and hermits crouched in caves." There are antiquarians collecting arrowheads and pieces of pottery, arguing over where they originate and what they might mean. The flight of the mind by necessity involves descent into time—the past—and not simply the narrator's past but a whole cultural prehistory. Woolf replaces much of this plot with the quick movements of thought, and much of the thought processes involve the sluggish procession of evolution.

In fact, the awareness of evolution generates a hyperconsciousness of its ramifications. This is what generates different levels of consciousness in the narrative, even as the narrative mode is a free-flowing stream of ideas. At crucial moments, the narrative breaks free of awareness to paradoxically embody the state of being that opposes the narrative flight of time. If the rapidity of present thoughts mimics how these quick glimpses into the past are fleeting, like being "torn asunder" from the views of humanity "as one rushes past in the train," there is another contemplative representation of the present moment. It gives a deeper, more somnolent sense of time and history that Woolf imagines as an unconscious, posthumous, vegetative existence:

The slow pulling down of thick green stalks so that the cup of the flower, as it turns over, deluges one with purple and red light. Why, after all, should one not be born there as one is born here, helpless, speechless, unable to focus one's eyesight, groping at the roots of the grass, at the toes of the Giants? As for saying which are trees, and which are men and women, or whether there are such things, that one won't be in a condition to do for fifty years or so. There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, rose-shaped blots of an indistinct colour—dim pinks and blues—which will, as time goes on, become more definite, become—I don't know what.¹⁹⁷

This passage could, without much of a shift in shape or form, find its way into the “Kew Gardens” interludes of the snail. It offers the same slow, vegetable time and perspective, and creates the same fusion between human and varied organic beings, the same deep sense of evolutionary time. This deeper form of reverie—wherin the narrator almost embodies her reveries of organic life—occurs on two more occasions. What begins as simile becomes perspective, almost an ontology of nature:

Yes, one could imagine a very pleasant world. A quiet, spacious world, with the flowers so red and blue in the open fields...a world which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin, grazing the stems of the water-lilies, hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs...How peaceful it is down here, rooted in the centre of the world and gazing up through grey waters, with their sudden gleams of light and their reflections....¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ *CSF*, 84.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

In each of these deeper reveries, the narrative has dipped into that Katharine Hilbery contemplative region that “entirely lacked self-consciousness.” Likewise, the act of contemplation dehumanizes in the sense that the ability to embody the impersonal affords the greatest feeling of liberation, perhaps also the greatest narrative freedom. In all of these moments, as it is in “Kew Gardens,” nature *is what is envisioned*; more precisely, a vision of organic or naturalistic life takes hold.

* 3.7: THE TREE OF LIFE

The narrator even wishes for this vision, wills it so when she thinks, “The tree outside the window taps very gently on the pane...I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciously, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts.”¹⁹⁹ The tree, in fact, grows in significance as the story breaks the surface, unfurls and floats atop this immense sea of thought that recedes and seeks out solidity—Woolf’s reveries finally all congregate around the last, protracted vision of the story: Woolf’s tree of life. It is worth quoting the passage fully:

Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea[...]Here is something definite, something real. Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of...Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow.

For years and years they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers--all things one likes to think about. The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it comes up again. I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream like flags blown out; and of water-beetles slowly raiding domes of mud upon the bed of the river. I like to think of the tree itself:—first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like to think of it, too, on winter's nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and strange in June; and how cold the feet of insects must feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with diamond-cut red eyes. . . One by one the fibres snap beneath the immense cold pressure of the earth, then the last storm comes and, falling, the highest branches drive deep into the ground again. Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms, where men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes. It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. (88-89)

Here is where Woolf's reverie grows most evolutionary, where the quick time of thought and living expand to replicate the deep time of evolution and seem to hang suspended in a moment's thought. The less self-conscious the narrator (and narrative) becomes, the more it partakes of

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 84-5

this naturalistic perspective. As a narrative representation, it processes from a stated desire to become one with nature to the narrative becoming nature. The series of “I like to think of”s” disappear, and a direct transmission of thought—as if what *it* is, were itself thinking—ensues. The narrator begins by reflecting on how nice it is to turn from the social encumbrances that govern a life to the pleasant thought of “worshipping the impersonal world” where there is “a proof of some existence other than ours.” This is nearly identical to Katharine Hilbury’s wish for unconsciousness and evolutionary contemplation in *Night and Day*, but then the thought itself becomes the daydream, and Woolf’s narrator imagines herself the tree, the dry sensation of *being wood*: the song of birds in its branches, the cold feet of insects upon it, standing “like some mast upon an earth that goes tumbling.”

In the midst of all these associations and felt sensations, the tree’s slow growth takes on a resonance larger than a pleasant, soothing vision of Romantic nature. Woolf’s tree of life in essence provides the illusion of solidity and continuity in a human lifetime that zooms so rapidly past. But its symbolic suggestiveness, like the snail’s of slow growth and gradual development, opposes the selfsame narrative representation of the rapidity of thought as the rapidity of life. The solidity of our lives—these discernible marks, this solid wooden furniture with which we crowd our interior spaces to give them some semblance of stability and order—after all comes from trees. Woolf’s narrator sits comfortably, presumably in her wooden chair, gazing contemplatively at the mark on the wall. And when trees die, when “the highest branches drive deep into the ground again,” Woolf continues, “Even so, life isn’t done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree... in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms” (88-89). Like the mechanisms of the city that surround Kew Gardens, the slow, organic growth of the tree, tapping at the window pane, furnishes the domesticated space of this narrative

interior as well as the ships of expeditions and the decaying houses of “a million patient, watchful lives” living out their own individual lives. That is the human relation to the tree, an organism in itself that partakes of this tree of life, even in the continuity of death. Natural time indeed becomes cosmic and human, the earthly revolutions also a stellar revolution of our perception of time. The narrative modes that part with convention in these two stories of evolution are the two times of Darwinian thought. In such a manner does Woolf’s form become evolutionary form.

Evolutionary form, because ultimately this is the very figure—the tree of life—that became the most representative figure of evolution, the metaphor Darwin made famous in his *Origin of Species*. It is the thought that constructs a destiny independent of human beings, and the form itself the evidence of an impersonal world whose existence is proof of all existence under the same impersonal mechanisms of nature. Almost ten years later, Woolf would elaborate on what she was exploring with her narrative breaks and departures, and quite explicitly state its relation to evolution and evolutionary time:

“The mind is full of monstrous, hybrid, unmanageable emotions. That the age of the earth is 3,000,000,000 years; that human life lasts but a second; that the capacity of the human mind is nevertheless boundless; that life is infinitely beautiful yet repulsive; that one’s fellow creatures are adorable but disgusting; that science and religion have between them destroyed belief; that all bonds of union seem broken, yet some control must exist—it is in this atmosphere of doubt and conflict that writers have now to create, and the fine fabric of a lyric is no

more fitted to contain this point of view than the rose leaf to envelop the rugged immensity of a rock.”²⁰⁰

Paul Ricoeur, a great reader of Woolf’s obsessions with time and narrative, could not have channeled her contradictory emotions better when he comments, “The length of time of a human life, compared to the range of cosmic time-spans, appears insignificant, whereas it is the very place from which every question of significance arises.”²⁰¹ The two times give rise to a whole string of contradictory thoughts and associations. “Kew Gardens” and “The Mark on the Wall” give the two times a narrative form: the one imagining the snail looking out of its evolutionary garden; the other inside imagining an evolutionary tree while looking at a real snail.

* 3.8: TRANSITIONS—THE SOLIDITY OF TREES: NARRATIVE CONTINUITY AND INTERRUPTION

Woolf, then, has created out of “The Mark on the Wall” and “Kew Gardens” her first great departures in conventional narrative form. These transformations to narrative not only alter perspective but the relation of that perspective to evolution and evolutionary time. Previous to “Mark” and “Kew,” the characters themselves had to discover their own connections to evolution and the immensity of time, plotting a course through social convention and adventurous expeditions. The characters experience the great crises and the ensuing moments of epiphany by experiencing the plotlines of conventional fiction. The Kew Gardens scene of *Night and Day* already offers a preview of what was to be the necessary link between the relation of evolution to time—a temporal awareness that would alter Woolf’s conception of the novel and ultimately the techniques with which she devised the temporal framework of the fiction to come. In questioning the plot of the Victorian novel, even while adhering to it in the conventional

²⁰⁰ “The Narrow Bridge of Art,” *Granite and Rainbow* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958) 12.

construction of *Night and Day*, Woolf uses this garden scene as a means to consider how evolutionary contemplation might take the shape of evolution. Julia Briggs notes that “Kew Gardens provides the setting for desire to bring about a reconciliation and a symbolic re-entry into Eden”,²⁰² but this is decidedly an evolutionary garden that marks Woolf’s first dedicated gestures towards a movement from evolutionary plotting to evolutionary form. *Night and Day*’s mergence of the social and visionary bodies, of the “life of society” (Woolf’s figurative *day*) and the “life of solitude” (night), still needed to include one more dualistic pairing: the correspondent timeframes of Darwin’s time of living and the deep time of nature. Woolf’s ambition is no less than a synthesis of the two times. Ricoeur refers to the mature example of *Mrs. Dalloway*, but the two times are first worked out explicitly and early. The Kew Gardens scenes give not just the expanse of vision through the evolutionary botany that Ralph discusses, but the expanse of temporality that evolutionary theory radically lengthens.

Take Ralph’s leonine pose while waiting for Katharine to show at Kew Gardens, where we are given the quick purview of the timekeeping that Woolf will employ in her own break with fictional conventions as she moves from evolutionary discourse to evolutionary form. Ten minutes elapse in two paragraphs as Ralph waits for Katharine. He simultaneously charts the progression of hands on his timepiece even as he experiences this monumental moment whereby all his past frustrations and future aspirations coalesce in this felt life of an eager love:

At a quarter-past three in the afternoon of the following Saturday Ralph Denham sat on the bank of the lake in Kew Gardens, dividing the dial plate of his watch into sections with his forefinger. The just and inexorable nature of time itself was reflected in his face. He might have been composing a hymn to the unhasting and

²⁰¹ *TN3*, 90.

²⁰² *Ibid*, xxx.

unresting march of divinity. He seemed to greet the lapse of minute after minute with stern acquiescence in the inevitable order. His expression was so severe, so serene, so immobile, that it seemed obvious that for him at least there was a grandeur in the departing hour which no petty irritation on his part was to mar, although the wasting time wasted also high private hopes of his own."²⁰³

What Ralph reads into the watch is his own future: "The world, he assured himself, since Katharine Hilbery was half an hour behind her time, offers no happiness, no rest from struggle, no certainty."²⁰⁴ But there is no outward expression of worry, no spat of nervous fidgeting; instead, Woolf presents Ralph as supremely stoic, passively accepting the judgment of time and the unfolding consequence of events. There is still "grandeur in the departing hour" and the way time lays to account, even lays waste to what counts to Ralph Denham.

Ralph takes the long view, which is also inevitably the tragic view of deep time: "Looking at his watch, he seemed to look deep into the springs of human existence, and by the light of what he saw there altered his course towards the north and the midnight... Yes, one's voyage must be made absolutely without companions through ice and black water—towards what goal?" Yet, when Katharine appears, Ralph's obsessive timekeeping ceases, as does his reverie. The time of romance becomes the time of nature. This reification of time through the watch's dial and reading into it an augury of the character's own direction in life represents well the dialectic that would come more and more to frame the temporal form Woolf's fiction was taking. The mechanisms of clock-time would conflict considerably with the mechanisms of nature. A schism opens up radically after Darwin unhinges the comforting vestiges of a divine watchmaker—William Paley's famous metaphor of the watch found in the middle of the heath,

²⁰³ 279

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 281.

meant to be analogous to the mechanisms of nature and pointing toward a supernatural artificier. That metaphor became extinct, defunct.²⁰⁵ “There cannot be design without a designer,” Paley argues, but design post-Darwin comes in the ruthless, remorseless, impersonal mechanism of adaptation by means of natural selection given the vast timeframes of geological time. There is no divine winding in Darwin’s mechanism. Ralph’s watch is not Paley’s time, and Darwin winds the clock back to its natural timesetting. “Kew Gardens” and “The Mark on the Wall” additionally return the the watch’s representative hands on the dial to the natural turns of the sun dividing day from night.

The need for the same development and representation of character in the manner that Woolf constructs a Ralph gives way to a narrative form that would take over the work of plot and character by containing it in the temporal dimensions of narrative representation. In discussing this departure in form, it would be irresponsible to not acknowledge the tremendous relation of Woolf’s narrative form to the corresponding departures in the visual arts, especially considering her close relationships and kinships within Bloomsbury. Many critics have looked to “Mark” and moreso to “Kew” for the influence of Roger Fry and Vanessa Bell, or Cezanne and Post-Impressionism more generally due to the vivid use of color in her description that eyes so carefully the surface of this garden scene. Comparison to the visual arts is indeed fruitful here, and Fry’s formalist example of his revered Cezanne bringing “design” to Impressionist “vision” can be seen in the way that Woolf’s impressions are vividly described but structurally contained by the hard geometry of the oval frame that circumscribes the entire sketch, or the seemingly solid object upon which the narrative draws its images. But Woolf’s design is naturally a *narrative* design, and Woolf’s fascination with space does not forestall movement; when Woolf traces her figures with colors and the variegated light patterns, the intensity emanates from what

²⁰⁵ This is Paley’s argument in the very influential *Natural Theology* (London, 1802).

moves through this one particular plot of Kew or what moves through the mind bent on the one particular mark on the wall. By remaining intent upon this one spot of story, “Kew Gardens” and “The Mark on the Wall” quite consciously explore what would be the more limiting dimensions of the painter’s canvas: movement and temporality.²⁰⁶ The mark that hangs the narrator’s moving images and frames her objects of thought is not a nail but a living snail.

This is not to say that Woolf devalues the still frames of the artist or the *feeling* of solidity, the equipoise of the solid and the shifting. She wants the craft of fiction to be the reader’s, the emotion that the form instills and not the structure that is seen. Woolf’s reader is meant to feel, in “The Mark on the Wall” for instance, how the fluidity of thought mimics the rapidity of life. This is what a story *about time*, conscious of how the narrative itself conveys it, contributes to a phenomenology of reading. Even then, Woolf at this early stage is experimenting with how she can accomplish through narrative this feeling of the newfound instability of time without eschewing structure altogether. Paradoxically, the consciousness of this unsettling dimension of time—Darwin’s deep time, that lies vastly across the billions of years and creates the millisecond of human significance without the compensatory gathering into either the artifice or the artificier of eternity—is precisely the feeling, working almost unconsciously, that Woolf wants her form to convey. At the deepest intimations of deep time, the long perspective of natural history gives Woolf’s new form its narrative structure.

What Woolf, at the completion of “Mark” and Kew,” had not worked through was how this temporal dimension to life, whereby these thoughts once embodied in a narrative mode, could additionally *arrest* time and forge some formal stability. The involuted/internal and evolved/external movements of both time structures had not yet “joined hands,” as Woolf put it.

²⁰⁶ Many critics have noticed this painterly quality and commented upon the influence of Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, and perhaps Cezanne and the Post-Impressionist exhibits that Fry brought to England in 1910 and 1912.

Both needed to be present in Woolf's vision of a fiction that would contain some balance between the solid and the shifting aspects of life that Woolf equally felt authentic and legitimate sources of experiencing the world. Of one model for her, DeQuincey, she would write that no author after him "could maintain that the whole truth of life can be told without 'piercing the haze'" which so often envelops one's own "secret springs of action and reserve."²⁰⁷ Yet, Woolf continues, "external events also have their importance." The writer must "devise some means by which the two levels of existence can be recorded—the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up of single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion."²⁰⁸ Woolf had indeed attempted her own piercing of the haze enveloping consciousness of character by devising "Mark" to mimetically represent the two levels internally and "Kew" to mimetically represent the two levels externally. Read together, they fulfill Woolf's vision of capturing "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day"²⁰⁹ but offer two different visions of it in the public garden and the private space.

There was the other quality she admired in DeQuincey's written *involutes*, where the moment miraculously protracts time and expands space, where "one moment may transcend in value fifty years."²¹⁰ By detaching narrative from the intimate investments of character and plot, Woolf had created for herself a new version of impersonality in narrative form, a naturalist's perspective that observes the subjectivity of thought externalized upon a garden or internalized through a mark. "To sit cheek by jowl with our fellows cramped up together is distasteful, indeed repulsive," Woolf writes. "But draw a little apart, see people in groups, as outlines, and they become at once memorable and full of beauty. Then it is not the actual sight or sound itself

²⁰⁷ CR2, 139.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ from "Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1925) 149.

²¹⁰ "DeQuincey's Autobiography," CR2, 138.

that matters, but the reverberations that it makes as it travels through our minds.”²¹¹ Great investment had been made in viewing humanity at this remove and to see beauty in movement of time and consciousness, a Darwinian time seen inhumanly, and a human time seen from the viewpoint of evolution. Even so, it had not resolved for Woolf that value of human time humanly felt. An ordinary mind on an ordinary day can also include some extraordinarily significant moments. In weighing the consequences of Darwin’s writing, Gopnick muses, “The tragedy of life is not that there is no God but that the generations through which it progresses are too tiny to count very much. There isn’t a special providence in the fall of a sparrow, but try telling that to the sparrows.” Even so, “The hardest Darwinian view of all is still roomy enough for ordinary love to breathe in.”²¹² At this juncture, Woolf was already enamoured of Joseph Conrad and Thomas Hardy’s use and application of “moments of vision” in their works.²¹³ She had fully digested Walter Pater, but she had not transformed her own personal experiences into DeQuincey’s autobiographical involute, transformed “moments of vision” into “moments of being” or found a form for fiction that would capture how those moments of being arise out of the vastly dominant and consuming “moments of non-being.”

For an essential problem in Darwin, as it became the problem for Woolf, is that time does not stand still, whether it be the long stretch of evolutionary time or the quick moment of individual living. How can the present moment be but a moving instant in time, when time is accepted as the long perspective of evolution? How can the moment made precious be anything but sentimental—or a Wordsworthian spot of time that found so much romance in nature still resonant with transcendence—after nature was so thoroughly realized as Darwinian? In *The*

²¹¹ “Impassioned Prose,” *Selected Essays*, 61.

²¹² “Rewriting Nature,” *New Yorker*, (Oct. 23, 2006) 59.

²¹³ See, for instance, Woolf’s essay “Moments of Vision” (1918).

Voyage Out, Rachel has many “exultations” of the present moment, none perhaps more memorable than her own tree of life:

But filled with one of those unreasonable exultations which start generally from an unknown cause, and sweep whole countries and skies into their embrace, she walked without seeing[...]. The constraint of being among strangers in a long silk dress made it unusually exciting to stride thus alone [...]. So she might have walked until she had lost all knowledge of her way, had it not been for the interruption of a tree, which, although it did not grow across her path, stopped her as effectively as if the branches had struck her in the face. It was an ordinary tree, but to her it appeared so strange that it might have been the only tree in the world. Dark was the trunk in the middle, and the branches sprang here and there, leaving jagged intervals of light between them as distinctly as if it had but that second risen from the ground. Having seen a sight that would last her for a lifetime, and for a lifetime would preserve that second, the tree once more sank into the ordinary ranks of trees, and she was able to seat herself in its shade and to pick the red flowers with the thin green leaves which were growing beneath it.²¹⁴

In this case, the tree “interrupts” Rachel’s own reverie, her “walking without seeing” in a blissful unawareness of her surroundings. The tree stops Rachel in her tracks “as if the branches had struck her in the face.” It somehow, mysteriously makes the moment whole, “would last for a lifetime, and for a lifetime would preserve that second.” Everything about why the tree does so and accomplishes so much remains vague, mysterious, ethereal. All we know is that the possibility of the moment happens when Rachel enjoys a rare space of time to herself. In “The Mark on the Wall,” the momentous reverie of the tree is not interrupting but interrupted. The

narrative tries to capture the clash of the interrupted moment: “Everything’s moving, falling, slipping, vanishing... There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying— / “I’m going out to buy a newspaper.”²¹⁵

Indeed, from Woolf’s earliest fiction to her final works, the moment of importance is incessantly interrupted. The late critic Lucio Ruotolo’s fine summation of this quality in her work, his titling of it *The Interrupted Moment*, captures well its consistency and its importance in an assessment of her process.²¹⁶ As many gestures as Woolf makes towards the flow of thought and the rapid flights of time, that narrative receives its share of ruptured, fragmented, broken moments. Throughout “The Mark on the Wall,” even until the last reverie of the tree, the narrator is interrupted out of some serenity or somnolence associated with the organic, nature-induced springs of consciousness. The present moment includes “Whitaker’s Almanack” of the “tables of precedency” and generals who administer wars: “I feel a satisfying sense of reality which at once turns the two Archbishops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of shades.... How peaceful it is down here... --if it were not for Whitaker’s Almanack.”²¹⁷ Thoughts interrupt other thoughts, particularly for Woolf’s female narrators whose thoughts are always encroached upon by “the masculine point of view which governs our lives,”²¹⁸ and the self grows fragmented, disoriented, and incomplete. Again and again, this wish for the solitary reverie unimpeded emerges in Woolf’s experiments with a new form for fiction. The “pleasant world” is one “without professors or specialists” but rather with one’s thought “hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs.”²¹⁹ In “An Unwritten Novel,” the narrative travels precariously fast as the narrator herself travels by train. The world in “Mark on the Wall” likened to being “blown

²¹⁴ *VO*, 194-195.

²¹⁵ *CSF*, 89.

²¹⁶ *The Interrupted Moment: A View of Virginia Woolf’s Novels* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

²¹⁷ *CSF*, 87-8.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 87.

through the tube at fifty miles an hour” and being “torn asunder” from the strangers outside the train windows is “An Unwritten Novel’s” fictional setting, where the narrator, an aspiring novelist, imagines an entire life out of the stranger sitting across from her. At every stop of the train, every noise, every entrance and exit and gesture of a passenger, there is an interruption. Even the face of the stranger being read and rewritten is

a break—a division—so that when you’ve grasped the stem the butterfly’s off—the moth that hangs in the evening over the yellow flower—move, raise your hand, off, high, away. I won’t raise my hand. Hang still, then, quiver, life, soul, spirit, whatever you are of Minnie Marsh—I, too, on my flower--the hawk over the down—alone—or what were the worth of life? To rise; hang still in the evening, in the midday; hang still over the down.²²⁰

Hang Still: Paradoxically, what Woolf was working towards was how the interruption of the moment could strike her scenes into stability, how a break in the unity of design could nonetheless create its completed vision. The internal flow of time and consciousness so evidently at play in these first experimental works always receives a rude intrusion that is ultimately formative. The ensuing chapter explores how these early narrative departures lead to narrative rupture. The striking interludes of “Kew Gardens” and the series of interruptions in “The Mark on the Wall” point towards Woolf’s complete rupture of form, a movement that is essentially creative in character. A Darwinian gradualism and continuity of time surprisingly meets a Darwinian fate. And yet fate is Greek... And the interruption is almost always of women...

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *CSF*, 117.

Chapter Four

Prefiguring the past before “Reading”: The Entomological Society and the Origins of Evolutionary Form in Woolf’s Narrative

4.1 INTRODUCTORY “READING”

A difficult but essential essay is Woolf’s “Reading,” which was written in 1919 among the cluster of essays and short stories from 1917-1920 that show Woolf in the act of working out her narrative principles for a Modernist fiction. “Modern Novels” from the same year I have already cited several times for the explicit, manifest assertions it contains, which is why it draws so much critical attention here and elsewhere, but “Reading” is arguably just as important, if not more so. Hermione Lee, in fact, links it with “Modern Novels” and “An Unwritten Novel” as the three pieces from this time period of transition between *Night and Day* and *Jacob’s Room* when Woolf “evolved a way of writing about her reading somewhere between notebook, diary, fiction, criticism”—the reading and re-reading of this period arguably “as important to her life-story as any of her relationships.”²²¹ “Reading” is Woolf’s first attempt in fiction or non-fiction to plot the literary history of England from the vantage point of the more obscure English writers of memoirs, voyage journals, and letters. Woolf’s narrator sits in the library of a manor house, dusky with Victorian accumulations, and peruses the shelves for quick sketches of the past. On the bookshelves are “Homer and Euripides; Chaucer, then Shakespeare; and the Elizabethans...and so down to our time or very near it, Cowper, Burns, Scott, Wordsworth and the rest.”²²² The narrator reads the past into these books, but the books also speak to the present, both personal and collective. “Writing is with them, as it can no longer be with us, making; making something that will endure,” she muses after reading a few letters from Elizabethans.

²²¹ *Virginia Woolf* 397-398.

“Horace Walpole, Jane Carlyle, Edward Fitzgerald are ghosts on the very outskirts of time. Thus these ancestors of ours, though stately and fair to look upon, are silent; they move through galleries and parks in the midst of a little oasis of silence which holds the intruding modern spirit at bay.”²²³ The Elizabethan sentence almost speaks of a different species.

“Reading” must be the origin in many respects of *The Common Reader* (1925), not in the least because Woolf mines the style, content and many choice passages from “Reading” for several of the essays that appear for the first time in her landmark essay collection.²²⁴ It likewise anticipates *A Room of One’s Own* and *Orlando*, even *Between the Acts*, in its historical scope and subject matter, though it is more personal in style and does not address explicitly any feminist issue. Some of its passages will be transposed in large swaths into *Jacob’s Room*. It also anticipates Woolf’s original conception for *The Pargiters*, before Woolf’s “essay-novel” divided into *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. As with “An Unwritten Novel,” one is more comfortable calling it a sketch or a “piece” than an essay or a short story, as genres and narrative techniques are blurred and merged. Woolf never published the essay, but it contains the germ of many publications to follow.

Equally compelling is how “Reading” incorporates ideas and influences that not only anticipate where Woolf was to go in her fictional experiments but also return to where she had already been. At this transitional phase between the conventional novel-writing evident in *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, and including the experimental short stories and radical novels of the 1920s, there is this intermediary phase that “Reading” represents. It incorporates material from a few of Woolf’s own recently published essays for the *Times Literary Supplement*, including “The House of Lyme” (1917) and “Trafficks and Discoveries” (1918), as well as large

²²² *The Captain’s Death Bed and Other Essays* (New York: HBJ, 1950) . 151.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 157.

chunks of her own early diary sketches, all employed to “evolve” a way of writing that links the critical, fictional, and autobiographical. In exploring how English literature has changed over the centuries, Woolf asks how the reader herself has changed. The reader’s perspective, not only what but how she sees, is of telling importance for Woolf. Formal questions about structure and literature become evolutionary; style evolves and language adapts. What Woolf attempts in “Reading” is an exegesis of literature that applies the theory of evolution not to the human body but to the narrative voice embodied by form. The result is a representative piece of writing that charts another branch of Woolf’s own evolution in narrative form.

The largest aspect of “Reading” that makes the essay conspicuous and important is its narrative structure. There are two days of reading divided by a strange, jarringly peculiar interlude. This interlude, in fact, interrupts the narrative progression of Woolf’s argument, breaks up the unity of her design and complicates a reading of it that simply notes the evolutionary arc that Woolf traces over several centuries of literature. Woolf had already begun to experiment in her short stories with shifts in narrative perspective and time. In “Kew Gardens” there are interludes and representations of nature that exist independently of the human characters who share the same space. In “The Mark on the Wall,” multiple reveries of the narrator imagining a natural world altogether free of human intrusion are altered by thoughts about the very conventions that the narrative structure undermines. Woolf takes a slightly different but significant approach to the problems of time and narrative in “Reading.” I would like to explore how this rupture in “Reading” binds the structure and the narrative technique of the essay to its evolutionary argument. The content of the interlude itself, its autobiographical nature, is especially important. The structural and contextual resemblance to *To the Lighthouse*

²²⁴ See especially “The Elizabethan Lumber Room” in *The Common Reader*, where passages about the Elizabethan explorers and Sir Thomas Browne are taken almost verbatim out of “Reading.”

and the interludes in *The Waves* is not coincidental. Woolf breaks the conventional narrative progression, via evolutionary theory, with an imposition of the natural world.

✱ 4.2 “READING” THE PAST

The evolutionary progression and the focus upon literary descent in “Reading” seem obvious enough. The first day begins with the narrator reading the Elizabethans, imagining herself going “back through the long corridor of sunny mornings,” boring her way “through hundreds of Augusts,” noting in these books the annals of transformation. From the narrative present, the remote language of the past emerges through a “slow process” whereby a rough, rustic people’s language receives domestication through all the new words used to signify “soft pillows, easy chairs, silver forks, private room.” Thinking about Elizabethan English and the modern present, Woolf’s reader muses, “...easy chairs it may be were the death of English prose.” These ancestral houses held generation after generation of families, like the “Leghs” of Lyme, barbaric and drunk and dumb, recording only the killing of a fox and “a Bowle of Hott Punch with ye Fox’s foot stew’d in it” afterwards. But if these “little fortresses of civilization” had not survived and the “swamp withheld,” how would “our more delicate spirits have fared—our writers, thinkers, musicians, artists—without a wall to shelter under, or flowers upon which to sun their wings?”²²⁵ Woolf reads into these sentences not simply a different form of writing than modern English, but a different way of being. Language is a seismograph of ontological shifts. The whole progress of civilization, the furnishing of rooms, the paving of roads and riding in good carriages, necessitates “ruptures” in language that communicate the changes, changes that are even “needed to break up the splendid [Elizabethan] sentences.”²²⁶ Language and dialect

²²⁵ 156.

²²⁶ 157.

are as evolutionary as the bodies who speak them: “One can see in fancy the face itself changing, and the manner of father to son, mother to daughter, losing what must have been their tremendous formality.”²²⁷

Much of what Woolf registers here, measuring the distance between an Elizabethan sentence and a modern one, is the movement and migration from exploration and conquest of the external world to the voyage inward of a civilization that can now harbor much of its past on the shelves of a well-furnished library.

“Reading” begins the same narrative trope and continues the same evolutionary plotting as *The Voyage Out*, but the external journey, the Elizabethan voyages of the past, all occur in the mind of the reader. The plot is read and imagined rather than retold and enacted. Woolf allows the adventure to remain in the Elizabethan past, where it may be read into the present. The evolution of English literature happens, in other words, at the level of the sentence, where the mental make-up of the past finds its present trace expression. Woolf makes much of Elizabethan formality as a convention analogous to a mental fortress, a representative configuration of a people expressing the rigors of the external world. They bear that formality wherever they go, indeed perhaps because of their exposure and vulnerability. At the same time, when these Elizabethan voyages are logged in Hakluyt and Froude, two of Woolf’s favorite writers from her own childhood, the narrator discovers “It is their youth” that distinguishes the Elizabethans from us. Their minds are “still unwritten over and capable of such enormous designs as the American forests cast upon them, or the Spanish ships, or the savages, or the soul of man.” They assume the “romantic proportions” of the small vessels that traveled the vast oceans, the sea then “larger and freer and with bigger waves upon it than the sea of our time.”²²⁸ Their imagination was

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.* 158-159.

impressionable and fluid and credulous—in other words, childlike in its enthusiasm and analogous to the most popular of tropes that makes the past at once more naïve and more glamorous. Woolf performs cultural anthropology upon the surface of these texts. The growth of the English empire is enveloped in a halo of anecdote and romance, as the early explorers, returning with a “black stone, veined with gold, or an ivory tusk, or a lamp of silver” become “little groups of merchant men settled here and there on the borders of the unexplored, and through their fingers the precious stream of coloured and rare and curious things begins slowly and precariously to flow towards London.”²²⁹ The English merchant is the “vanguard of civilization,” and Woolf’s reader sees in their accounts an unconscious, eager, inquisitive naivety unavailable to the Conradian voyager settled in the late Victorian outposts of progress. The Elizabethan merchants are ignorant of the colonial consequences, unaware and therefore freer. Their imagination is fluid, but the formal, gilded sentence holds their mental spoils like the vaulted arches of St. Paul’s cathedral.

What most piques the curiosity of Woolf’s narrator is the way in which this focus upon the far reaches of the external world coincides with an absence of self-consciousness in the writing. “Strange must have been their thoughts; strange the sense of the unknown; and of themselves, the isolated English, burning on the very rim of the dark, and the dark full of unseen splendours.”²³⁰ This is particularly evident in human interactions and relations. Among the “beasts and plants” imported, including the “seeds of all our roses,” are an explorer’s accounts of a savage caught “somewhere off the coast of Labrador, taken to England and shown about like a wild beast.” When they catch a woman the next year and keep her on board as his primitive Eve, the two “blush profoundly” at first sight of each other. For Woolf, this is the blush of self-

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.* 160-161.

awareness, the recognition of oneself as another, the presence of consciousness. Profound here is the turn inward that it symbolizes. “We seem to be able to guess why they blushed,” Woolf’s reader suggests; “the Elizabethans would notice it, but it has waited over three hundred years for us to interpret it.”²³¹ In fact, for the modern reader the pages of Hakluyt fail to keep her attention from wandering for the lack of blushes, something they have no need of because “they make no mention of oneself; seem altogether oblivious to such an organism.”²³² This makes the Elizabethans almost as remote to the contemporary Englishman as the Greeks, both of whom Woolf reads as so intriguing and mysterious to the moderns precisely because we tend to “impute to the dead the qualities we find lacking in ourselves,”²³³ just as we impute to the young the virtues and vices we feel we have lost.

* 4.3 “READING”: DAY TWO

So goes the first day of reading in “Reading.” To find the blush of modernity, Woolf’s reader returns the next day to Sir Thomas Browne, a writer who emerges from the Elizabethan era with all the collective accumulations of his immediate predecessors, but with a dark skin “constantly suffused with blushes.” What makes him the modern specimen? “In that dark world, he was one of the first explorers; the first to talk of himself,” one of the “first of our writers to be definitely himself.”²³⁴ Where the Elizabethan explorers wrote of travels to unknown continents, and their merchants recorded the ceremonies of Russian emperors or savage traders, Browne does not: “The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on; for the other I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² 163.

²³³ *Ibid.* 163, 175. See also Woolf’s essay “On Not Knowing Greek.”

²³⁴ 173.

recreation.”²³⁵ What Woolf discovers is the origin of the English author as subject, the self as self-knowledge, awareness as self-consciousness. Browne gives to English literature “the health of his interest in himself...I, I, I...the form of a human being... For upon this sublime prospect of time and eternity the cloudy vapours which his imagination conjures up, there is cast the figure of the author.”²³⁶ Of Shakespeare we know next to nothing; of the Greeks we know even less because the egotism of the writer “scarcely presents itself at all” in their case.²³⁷ The Elizabethan sailor does not know why a savage would blush at his captivity because he does not see himself in the savage.

Browne, on the other hand, compares the inner world to the outer world. He explores himself, and the self as subject becomes an object of thought. Even when the subjects are ostensibly animals, plants and the like, there is the figure of Browne at the center of his observations. The author of *Vulgar Errors* devotes chapters to the English misconceptions about the blood of pelicans, the joints of elephants, the seeds of plants, the premonitions of death in insect noises, but they all appeal to the reader in the same way a Renaissance woodcut of these animals displays a “queer facial likeness to human beings.”²³⁸ From Browne, Woolf’s reader can discern what is to come, what is contemporary, can ruminate over Thomas Hardy and measure the distance but see in it a likeness of the self. Where gradations between the Elizabethans and the modernist reader were hard to discover, traces of the human form seen in Browne are evident in Hardy and especially in Hardy’s reader.

* 4.4: THE INTERLUDE

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.* 174-5.

²³⁷ 175.

²³⁸ 171.

This is also the argument of Woolf's essay "The Elizabethan Lumber Room," because it is for the most part Woolf's revision of "Reading" for inclusion in *The Common Reader* six years later. But what is conspicuously missing in the later essay is the middle section of "Reading," where Woolf's reader, through a curious departure from reading, bridges the Elizabethan explorer of the wide world with Browne's exploratory introspection. She shuts her books and looks out the window toward the approaching evening, which deepens and darkens the books themselves, the "Travels, histories, memoirs, the fruit of innumerable lives."²³⁹ From these texts, Woolf's reader fathoms the past teeming in the present and even flooding the future: "Truly, a deep sea, the past, a tide which will overtake and overflow us." She observes some tennis players walking up the path to the manor house who already "looked half transparent." The woman stoops over to smell "a pallid rose," perhaps a specimen brought back by one of Hakluyt's explorers of the sixteenth century. This is what follows:

Then, as [the tennis players] passed inside, the moths came out, the swift grey moths of the dusk, that only visit flowers for second...It was, I supposed, nearly time to go into the woods.

About an hour previously, several pieces of flannel soaked in rum and sugar had been pinned to a number of trees. The business of dinner now engrossing the grown-up people we made ready our lantern, our poison jar, and took our butterfly nets in our hands. The road that skirted the wood was so pale that its hardness grated upon our boots unexpectedly. It was the last strip of reality, however, off which we stepped into the gloom of the unknown. The lantern shoved its wedge of light through the dark, as though the air were a fine bank of snow piling itself up in banks on either side of the yellow beam. The direction of the trees was known to the leader of the party, who walked ahead,

²³⁹ 164.

and seemed to draw us, unheeding darkness or fear, further and further into the unknown world. Not only has the dark the power to extinguish light, but it also buries under it a great part of the human spirit.²⁴⁰

There have been fanciful digressions in the essay previous to this interlude of moth-hunting, where she wanders in and out of the book she is reading, but no reference is made to literature here—the books are shut. Woolf then goes on to describe, in vivid detail, the eventual capture of a huge, rare specimen of moth, a Red Underwing, the largest of all nocturnal moths indigenous to Great Britain.

Why is this here? Many things about it are peculiar, not the least being the transformation of the narrator, who had seemed a mature, incredibly erudite woman very much in the likeness of Woolf herself. Now she presents herself as a child. The grown-ups are “occupied with dinner” while she goes off with the unnamed “leader” to hunt moths. There is the sense that the child is mother of the woman, that the youth of Woolf’s reader approaches some symbolic equivalence with the “youth” of the Elizabethan imagination. It is a literary evolution—a private ontogeny of sorts that recapitulates a former manifestation of English civilization. The Elizabethan voyages to the dark, unknown places of the uncivilized earth are replicated in this voyage through an “unknown world” shrunk to the proportions of a child’s imagination. The dark woods here are within short walking distance of the manor house, but they are as vast and as imaginatively extensive as the wide world. The distance, in short, between the Elizabethans and the reader, may be contracted from an historical timeline of centuries to the years of an individual’s lifespan, a moment’s thought retrieved from a personal past.

²⁴⁰ 164-167

It is also preparation for a second day of reading, which is much more introspective. That same year, Woolf discusses the modern novel's exploration of the "dark regions of psychology."²⁴¹ The moth anecdote becomes available to Freudian dream analysis. Woolf's discussion of English literary history gives way to an unconscious nocturne, traveling "further and further into the unknown world" that has been buried by the light of day. The relinquishment of her essay's narrative to the moths, however, is not simply a Freudian insertion of unconscious associations; there is a chronology to this story, a narrative thread that is controlled and told, not dreamt and released. But the reader's psyche does become her own subject, and the scene anticipates the ruminations of Sir Thomas Browne. The sound of a falling tree breaks the somnolence, and Woolf's narrator poses her own analysis of the scene with the approach of morning and that second day of reading, which serves as Woolf's transition to Sir Thomas Browne and blushes and Thomas Hardy and contemporary sensibilities. Hermione Lee, one of the only critics I have found to have addressed this section of the essay, simply writes: "It becomes harder than ever to decide whether this is an essay on reading—or dreaming—or an autobiographical reminiscence."²⁴²

Lee refers in part to the autobiographical sketch Woolf refashions, largely about her brother Thoby Stephen, but leaves the reading of "Reading" ambiguous. What I would like to suggest is that, peculiar as this interlude remains, its reference to Woolf's own autobiographical experience provides a crucial clue to her later configuration of a Modern narrative form. The moths of "Reading" hover over Woolf's childhood, and the essay's conflation of personal anecdote and literary history has a purpose. Its departure from the narrative of reading interrupts the smooth trajectory of narrative progression, creates a narrative time independent of the

²⁴¹ "Modern Novels" *Essays* III 35.

²⁴² *Virginia Woolf*, 398.

temporal framework of the narrative. The interlude breaks up the unity of the narrative, even as it extends a corridor from the Elizabethan past to the modernist present. Support for this premise requires its own prehistory, its own interlude back into Woolf's prenarrative field of experience.

✱ 4.5: LARVA GROOM AND LANTERN BEARER

The moths dividing Woolf's "Reading" into Elizabethan and Modernist eras were not the first specimens she collected. As a child with her brother Thoby, Virginia Stephen learned to "sugar trees," the amateur naturalist's practice of soaking flannel with a mixture of rum and treacle and then tacking it to trees. At night, the sugar would attract, intoxicate, and facilitate the capture of moth specimens. John Waller 'Jack' Hills—the suitor and eventual husband of Virginia's stepsister Stella Duckworth—first taught the Stephen children this practice. In "Sketch," Woolf writes that Jack Hills "stands in my mind's picture gallery for a type—and a desirable type; the English country gentleman type." Of his many qualities, Woolf continually returns to this aspect of him: "he brought...country life into our distinguished literary, book-loving world....He was a real [countryman] too; not a fake; a passionate countryman."²⁴³ While visiting Stella and the family at their idyllic summerhouse in St. Ives, Jack Hills "gave us a copy of Morris's *Butterflies and Moths*, over which I spent many hours, hunting up our catches among all those pictures of hearts and darts and setaceous Hebrew characters."²⁴⁴ Their enthusiasm was such that when Leslie and Julia Stephen discovered them collecting insects in "tooth powder jars," they recognized their children's "mania; and put it on a legal basis; bought us nets and

²⁴³ *Ibid.* 101-104

²⁴⁴ *Moments of Being*, p. 104. Francis Morris wrote popular natural history field books on the histories of British butterflies and moths. See Schulkind's footnotes, p. 104.

setting boards; and indeed [Mother] went with Walter Headlam down to the St Ives public house and bought us rum [for the sugaring treacle mixture]”.²⁴⁵

This is how the “Entomological Society” of the Stephen household was founded. Prominent in all of Virginia Woolf’s abiding nostalgia for Talland House summers in St. Ives is their ‘bug-hunting,’ especially of butterflies by day and moths by night. Even in the winters, when the weather was inhospitable for the young lepidopterists, the Entomological Society met to discuss and read about natural history. In the very first preserved diary entry of Virginia Woolf, a fourteen-year-old Virginia Stephen records Thoby reading a paper to the family on the “History of the Club.”²⁴⁶ A playful diary entry from December of 1897 actually lists the rank and position of each Entomological Society member: Leslie Stephen was president, George Duckworth the librarian, Thoby the “Larva Groom,” and Virginia herself both the “Secretary Chairman & Treasurer.” The hapless Adrian Stephen, the youngest of the Stephen siblings, was present for the meeting but—as dutifully recorded by Secretary Chairman Virginia—is “not on the Committee.”²⁴⁷ Adrian is often playfully ridiculed by the young Virginia for his inept bugging prowess, “a supernumerary amateur” only “proficient in the art of obscuring the lamp at critical moments” and about as important to one sugaring expedition in 1899 as “Gurth the Dog.”²⁴⁸ But Woolf also remembers in her memoir that as the “name finder” of the Entomological Society, she herself was “scolded severely by Thoby...for slackness.”²⁴⁹

More than Larva Groom, Thoby was the most passionate member of the club. All of the Stephen children participated, but it was Thoby whom Virginia Stephen describes as its leader.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 104

²⁴⁶ *A Passionate Apprentice*, p. 5.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁴⁹ *Moments of Being*, 104.

²⁵⁰ *A Passionate Apprentice; The Early Journals 1897-1909*, ed. by Mitchell A Leaska (New York: HBJ, 1990). Especially see 141ff.

Throughout Woolf's earliest diaries, when summer activities in the country are noted, Thoby is "out bugging," often with Virginia and the others in tow, but sometimes by himself. "It is very funny that he should have developed this thirst for natural history," Leslie Stephen wrote, "considering how little encouragement he has had."²⁵¹ The country naturalist, however, is one of the enduring images Woolf creates of her brother. One of the final portraits Virginia Woolf sketches of Thoby closely resembles the country gentleman type she associates with Jack Hills: "for always round him, like the dew that collects in beads on a rough coat, there hangs the country; butterflies; birds; muddy roads; muddy boots; horses."²⁵²

Moth hunting was especially prolific on summer family vacations to St. Ives or other country settings, such as Painswick in 1897 and Warboys in 1899.²⁵³ On August 13, 1899, Virginia Stephen jots down a lengthy and incredibly vivid description of "sugaring." It is an important enough passage to dwell on, because this is the setting and circumstance Woolf rewrites into the interlude of "Reading." With Thoby set to begin at Trinity College, Cambridge that fall, there is a commemorative and self-conscious tone to writing about the topic that is absent from her earlier diary entries, an awareness that this would be the last time they would sugar together. Save Thoby, they already had outgrown it: "Tonight & last we began our Sugar campaign—Thoby rather, the rest of us have rather departed from that profession. Sugaring must be explained," she continues, and goes on to give minute details of the ingredients in the sugar "decoction" and the precise method of pinning the flannel to the trees.²⁵⁴ The usual nocturnal procession of insect and human follows with an air of lighthearted romance and mock adventure, especially in her sketch of Thoby among the moths:

²⁵¹ Stephen to Mary Fisher, 23 March 1902, qtd. in *Virginia Woolf*, Hermione Lee, (New York: Knopf, 1997), p. 115.

²⁵² *Ibid.* 136.

²⁵³ see *A Passionate Apprentice*, 5-142.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

The moth roaming melancholy thro' the woods suddenly snuffs a strange & delicious odor: rum! He follows it & reaches the fountain head, where perhaps he finds a dozen of his cronies already seated. He promptly folds his wings & settles on one of the veins of precious liquid, his proboscis in a second is imbedded in a rich drop, & in a few minutes he is imbibing like an opium eater. This is from the moths point of view—man, the hunter, starts forth in the following procession. Firstly of course the leader of the expedition, the renowned J[ulian] T[hoby] S[tephen]. He wears a large felt hat, & muffled round him is a huge brown plaid, which makes his figure striding in the dark most picturesque & brigand like. In his hand he carries a glass jar. (141)

Virginia herself is the “lantern bearer” who “lights the paths fitfully with a Bicycle lamp of brilliant but uncertain powers of illumination” (141). The children advance in the dark checking all of the sugared trees. “Then the leader calls out—Advance slowly—& the lantern bearer brings the light to bear gradually on the tree to be examined....The leader, should one of his guests strike his fancy, uncorks his poison pot, gently taps the specimen on the nose—the cork is shut—& the moth, his brain dazed with the delicious fumes of liquor, sinks into an all embracing arm.” The narrative concludes with a sighting of a rare Red Underwing that gets away:

By the faint glow we could see the huge moth—his wings open, as though in ecstasy, so that the splendid crimson of the underwing could be seen—his eyes burning red, his proboscis plunged into a flowing stream of treacle. We gazed one moment on his splendour, & then uncorked the bottle. I think the whole procession felt some unprofessional regret when,

with a last gleam of scarlet eye & scarlet wing, the grand old moth vanished” (142).

In “Reading,” the Red Underwing’s escape is described as a lost “possession of infinite value,” but there is a further encroachment into the woods, a second attempt that results in its capture: “The glory of the moment was great. Our boldness in coming so far was rewarded, and at the same time it seemed as though we had proved our skill against the hostile and alien force.”²⁵⁵ The capture in Woolf’s essay serves a particular revisionary purpose, a symbolic gesture of aesthetic completion, the evanescent stuff of reality *momentarily* circumscribed and sealed in fictional version. But the scene fulfills a greater need and has stronger reverberations than mere poetic license. If Woolf’s first memory of the waves crashing on the shore at St. Ives is her most abiding memory, this summoning of the moths of her childhood rivals it as her most evocative. Moths—butterflies, too, though not as abundantly—are everywhere in Virginia Woolf’s writing, and there is an amateur naturalist’s enthusiasm, an observational precision and theoretical assertion behind their suggestive, symbolic resonance.

✧ 4.6: DARWIN AMONG THE MOTHS

The historical prototype of the country gentleman naturalist is, of course, that of Charles Darwin, whose amateur enthusiasm for entomology led to a voyage of discovery that his Elizabethan predecessors could not have fathomed and many of his Victorian contemporaries would not accept. Janet Browne’s landmark biography of Darwin makes clear how this “idle sporting man,” more prone to catching beetles and shooting birds than devoting time to his medical studies or his Cambridge exams, made his way into a culture of amateur naturalists who networked and communicated their findings all across England. It was a part of what Browne

defines as the “gentlemanly ethos of a free exchange of scientific information.”²⁵⁶ The Darwinian revolution in science depended upon retired generals, admiralty officers, spinsters, county parsons, and many of the other characters of the leisure classes who inhabited the English countryside and the pages of Victorian literature. As early as the 1820s and 30s, natural history periodicals sprouted up all over England, documenting the growing number of insects contained in specimen boxes. Darwin would recall in his autobiography: “No poet ever felt more delight at seeing his first poem published than I did at seeing in Stephens’ *Illustrations of British Insects* the magic words, ;captured by c. Darwin, Esq.”²⁵⁷ This society that bred Darwin and cultivated his natural history interests would likewise continue to contribute to Darwin’s studies when he returned home from the voyage of the *H.M.S. Beagle*. Darwin complained about the extraordinary amount of letters he fielded every day from amateur local collectors and enthusiasts, but he depended upon their expertise as much as he did on the university-trained specialists to collect, to classify, and even to theorize. The legend of Darwin and the number of people who could claim some stake or role in his work created even more enthusiasm for the localized hobby and pursuit. There were Jack Hills and amateur entomological societies all across England.

The Stephen family’s “Entomological Society,” in all of its playfulness, pays homage to what David Allen Elliston describes as the “Early Victorian invention,” which was to “bring more benefits” and have a “more far-reaching influence” than any other social development of natural history: the “field club.”²⁵⁸ Modeled on philosophical and intellectual societies that had been established in the late eighteenth century—such as the the Linnean Society of London, where Darwin and Wallace first announced their theory of evolution—these small, provincial

²⁵⁵ “Reading,” 167-168.

²⁵⁶ Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin: Voyaging* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 101.

organizations met to discuss, announce, and publish the newest specimen discoveries and the most advanced specimen-collecting techniques. It was not in the great intellectual halls of London, but on the property of a grocer in 1832, that two brothers noticed that moths were attracted to some canisters of dark brown West Indies sugar. “Taking the hint, they proceeded to experiment by placing several of these...in open places in the neighborhood...they caught by this means no fewer than 69 species, some of them quite uncommon.” A note on the success was published in Newman’s *Entomological Magazine*; but it was not until 1844, after the experiments of the Northumberland squire, and sometime ornithologist, P. J. Selby, that a feasible and easily duplicated “treacle” formula “spread up and down the country, in no time at all effecting a veritable revolution in the range of species represented in the average collector’s cabinet.”²⁵⁹ Selby and others recognized that the technique had potential greater than the wealth of personal collections, providing “an excellent means of studying the seasonal duration of different species as well as the fluctuating ratio of the sexes.”²⁶⁰ Such notes in the provincial entomological club magazines and correspondence among enthusiasts resulted in a huge profusion of known varieties of insect species and more accurate scientific fieldwork.

Perhaps the most famous result of this synergy between amateur naturalists, scientific theorists, and grassroots fieldwork innovations is the textbook case of evolutionary theory: the peppered moth. The first black mutation of the peppered moth was sighted in 1848 in Manchester, England, but by 1864 R. S. Edleston recorded that the black variety was the “more common morph” in his garden. This report, just five years after the publication of *The Origin of Species*, began immediately to be read in light of evolutionary theory. By 1895, the black variety constituted ninety-eight percent of the species observed in Manchester, England. Lepidopterist

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ David Allen Elliston *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History* (Princeton UP: 1978) 142.

James William Tutt theorized that the dramatic change in the species was not only natural selection in play but the result of the industrialization of England. The sulfur dioxide from coal plants had killed the lichen on surrounding trees of industrialized areas, leaving the bark blackened by soot and rendering the lighter variety of the peppered moth easy prey for birds, a clear example of evolution at work and the impact of environmental changes brought about by humans.²⁶¹ Such a close observation and tally of varying transformations of a species of moth over a span of decades would not have been possible if it were not for these entomological societies.

Though subscriptions to many of these societies were so expensive that only the affluent could afford membership, there were also many botanical and natural history clubs among the working class, often in the districts where industrialization was greatest, including Lancashire, Cheshire, and Yorkshire.²⁶² Many of these clubs were exclusively manual laborers, “factory operatives or jobbing gardeners.” While Darwin’s idiosyncratic or eccentric entomological preoccupations have been widely celebrated, they should not be viewed as isolated:

He and his entomological friends stood on the threshold of the great explosion of interest in popular natural history that characterized the early Victorian period: the period when seashells, ferns, minerals, insects, flowering plants, seaweeds, fossils, birds, and all conceivable natural curiosities were collected for pleasure...and when amateurs and experts operated on a single scale as yet barely subdivided by professional qualifications.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Elliston, 133.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ This historical overview is mostly culled from “The Peppered moth: decline of a Darwinian disciple,” delivered to the British Humanist Association, at the London School of Economics, on Darwin Day, 12th February 2004.

<http://www.gen.cam.ac.uk/Research/Majerus/Darwiniandisciple.doc>. For a full account of the natural history of the peppered moth, see Michael Majerus’s *The Peppered Moth: Evolution in Action* (1998).

²⁶² Elliston 142-144.

²⁶³ Browne 101-102

It was a subject and a hobby available to all, not yet a branch of knowledge requiring specialized degrees or years of university training. Darwin himself employed uneducated collectors to find specimens while in Edinburgh and Cambridge, collectors who had found a new profession as field guides and specimen collectors for wealthy students and eager professors. The hobby was still young and open enough for women to gain access and fame and expertise, outside of the rigid patriarchal strictures of Victorian England:

It was as feasible for Mary Anning, the daughter of a shopkeeper in Lyme Regis, to collect and recognize an entirely new fossilized creature (eventually named Ichthyosaurus) in 1811 as it was for George Eliot, Philip Henry Gosse, Charles Kingsley, and the Duchess of Portland to seek out attractive sea anemones and shells, or for trained university personnel like Grant and Jameson to sail round the Firth of Forth gathering sponges to dissect.²⁶⁴

How many other intellectual fields of interest were there available to a George Eliot? Perhaps one, if she used a pseudonym. The social barriers remained, but the science was not yet a department available only to the male educated class of England.

Natural history fieldwork, in fact, often occupied the entire family, male and female. Darwin famously employed his children in all aspects of his study, as well as his gardeners and servants. Joseph Dalton Hooker's wife illustrated many of his botanical specimens and worked closely with him.²⁶⁵ One of the most prominent entomologists of late Victorian England was Eleanor Ormerod, whom Woolf admired greatly and featured in her *Common Reader* essay, "The Lives of the Obscure" (1925). Ormerod had to wait for her father's death before she could pursue her passion for entomology. She never married. Her autobiography and correspondence

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 102.

²⁶⁵ *Browne*, 102.

were published in 1904, revealing Ormerod's struggle with male scientists who "won't take a woman's word,"²⁶⁶ as well as her correspondence with farmers struggling with insects that destroyed their crops. Ormerod accomplished more than any other entomologist of her day in the practical application of fieldwork observation to the prevention of crop infestation; and for her work, she was awarded several honorary degrees from male institutions. One can see her as a prominent if unnamed figure standing behind *A Room of One's Own*, a Jane Ellen Harrison of the scientific world. This is a Victorian pursuit that Woolf not only inherited but also cherished.

✱4.7: LEPIDOPTERA WOOLFIANA

Woolf's entomological interest and childhood enthusiasm are certainly behind the inspiration of *The Waves*, whose origin lies in a story her sister Vanessa told her of being beset by moths while vacationing in Cassis, France. Vanessa had described in her letter how one huge moth kept tapping at the windowpane, prompting her to kill it at the children's bidding. Then Vanessa remembers the research of moths done by French entomologist Jean Henri Fabre, the first scientist to discover pheromones in insects in his seminal study *Social Life in the Insect World* (1913): "Then I remembered—didn't Fabre try experiments with this same creature and attract all the males in the neighbourhood by shutting up one female in the room? Just what we have done. So probably soon the house will be full of them....write a book about the maternal instinct," Vanessa continued, "which is one of the worst of the passions, animal and remorseless."²⁶⁷ Julia Briggs astutely reconstructs how Vanessa had "focused on two primal urges that link human behaviour to the world of nature—the sexual instinct and the maternal instinct," and how Woolf allowed her own experiences with moth-hunting to coalesce into her

²⁶⁶ qtd. in "The Lives of the Obscure," *Common Reader*, 128.

drafts of *The Waves*.²⁶⁸ The working title of *The Waves* was in fact ‘The Moths’; Woolf originally imagined them inundating her plot at the novel’s intersections, as the sun and ocean now do in the interludes of *The Waves*. Woolf envisioned that the moths would flutter through a window in a room with a lamp and a flowerpot, thus registering the time of day. Their central organizing presence in the novel disappears for one crucial, simple reason: “Moths, I suddenly remember, don’t fly by day,” Woolf jots down in her diary.²⁶⁹

A moth that does is memorialized in Woolf’s late, haunting essay, “The Death of the Moth,” wherein this hay-colored, zig-zagging “bead of pure life” and energy batters helplessly against her window-pane until it succumbs to death in a diminutive yet epic struggle. When Virginia Woolf refers to the “living, quivering thing” in her fiction, that aspect of reality she associates with the transitive but vibrant “life” of consciousness, it is often a moth or a butterfly that completes the metaphor for her. This is why Harvena Richter has argued that moths in Virginia Woolf are symbolic of the creative imagination.²⁷⁰

But the moth’s life is short-lived, its moment indeed a metonym for life, though Woolf’s association has at least as much to do with the force of death as with life: “The struggle was over. The insignificant creature now knew death. As I looked at the dead moth, this minute wayside triumph of so great a force over so mean an antagonist filled me with wonder.... Oh yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am.”²⁷¹ In every language, the butterfly resonates with an etymology of life—the papilio a Latin ‘soul’ and the ‘psyche’ a Greek mind, for instance. But the Old English word for our modern ‘moth’ can be traced to the Scandinavian word for ‘maggot.’ Butterflies spring with spring and flutter through the summer, but the prime moth

²⁶⁷ I am indebted to Julia Briggs for this connection to Fabre. See *The Inner Voice*, p. 241.

²⁶⁸ *The Inner Voice*, 241-250.

²⁶⁹ Diary III, Sept. 1929

²⁷⁰ “Hunting the Moth: Virginia Woolf and the Creative Imagination,” *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity*, ed. by Ralph Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) p. 13-28.

season is late summer to autumn, and Woolf's essay takes place on a mid-September day. Butterflies are perennial symbols of regeneration and rebirth, transformation and metamorphosis, but their cousins of the night have darker associations. This is why she begins the essay by stating, "Moths that fly by day are not properly to be called moths." The greater force here is death, but the associations were multiform. Moths were a central part of her childhood remembrances.

It is not coincidence or fancy, then, that Woolf lands upon the following metaphor in her memoir to describe the shock of the two successive deaths of her mother and her step-sister Stella Duckworth, in 1895 and 1897 respectively:

But I was thinking, feeling, living...the muffled intensity, which a butterfly or moth feels when with its sticky tremulous legs and antennae it pushes out of the chrysalis and emerges and sits quivering beside the broken case for a moment; its wings still creased; its eyes dazzled, incapable of flight.... I remember saying to myself after [Stella] died: 'But this is impossible; things aren't, can't be, like this'—the blow, the second blow of death, struck on me; tremulous, filmy eyed as I was, with my wings still creased, sitting there on the edge of my broken chrysalis.²⁷²

Woolf describes the death of her mother as "a latent sorrow" that she could not master at thirteen, but the ensuing death of Stella "fell on a different substance; a mind stuff and being stuff that was extraordinarily unprotected, unformed, unshielded, apprehensive, receptive, anticipatory."²⁷³ Larva, pupa, chrysalis, adulthood—instead of stage succeeding stage to the inevitable triumph of a thing with wings, the stuff of children's narratives, Woolf's metaphor expresses the moment's intense fragility, a lack of development, an incompleteness—

²⁷¹ *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (New York: HBJ, 1970).

²⁷² "A Sketch of the Past," *MOB*, 124

“unprotected, unformed, unshielded.” Her emergence stresses the cocoon torn open, the blow, the body on edge and receptive, the folded wings incapable of flight, an image that does not offer a chance for survival.

The broken chrysalis might be Virginia’s, but it was Stella’s emergence from the gloom of grieving over their mother, her release from discharging their mother’s duties as the eldest female in Leslie Stephen’s antiquated Victorian household, that Woolf lingers over in her autobiographical sketches. Stella’s promise ended when her second life had just begun. She had been married a few months to Jack Hills, the “countryman” who taught the Stephens to “bug,” when she died. Her long courtship to Jack began at St. Ives, where there “were long summer evenings with white moths abroad,” and after two secessions, it finally matured into a passionate romance after their mother’s death. In her earliest autobiographical sketch, “Reminiscences” (1908), Woolf recalls their engagement vividly: “Stella left the room with him...and decisively shut the door. We...followed them soon with a lantern, for we were then in the habit of catching moths after dinner. Once or twice we saw them, always hasting round a corner...But the moon was bright, and there were no moths; Stella and Jack had gone in.” They all gathered in Thoby’s room to hear the news. Leslie Stephen had lost his surrogate angel and described the damage as “irreparable,” little Adrian Stephen wept at the announcement (another mother lost), but Woolf recalls the “exquisite tremor of life once more alight in Stella...She had come to stand by herself, with a painful footing upon real life, and her love now had as little dependence in it as may be.”²⁷⁴ It was Woolf’s first vision “—so intense, so exciting, so rapturous was it that the word vision applies—my first vision then of love between man and woman...It was bodiless; a light;

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *MOB*, 49-50.

an ecstasy. But also extraordinarily enduring.”²⁷⁵ Eventually, the children all shared in it. The grief had made them “unnaturally responsive to Stella’s happiness, and the promise it held for her and for us to escape from that gloom.”²⁷⁶ For the young Virginia Stephen, “It was beautiful; it was, once more, a flight of unfurled wings into the upper air.”²⁷⁷ It also made the second blow, at the edge of a broken chrysalis, so traumatic.

These complementary anecdotes capture Virginia Woolf at different stages of remembrance and recollection, when the moths had clearly become representative both of her “unhappy years”²⁷⁸ and of her transition from childhood to adulthood. To open Woolf’s earliest diaries, begun in 1897 when all of the children decided to keep one, is to read more immediately how closely bound to entomology the entire family had become, how interwoven Woolf’s first conception of romantic love was to the nightly sugaring campaigns, and how therapeutic the continuation of the amateur naturalist activities were after the deaths of Woolf’s mother and the step-sister who replaced her. At the meeting of the Stephen Entomological Society where Thoby reads his history of the club and a “retrospect” of the club’s activities from the previous year, the other order of business is to send a letter of congratulations to the newly married Stella and Jack Hills. When Stella dies and the family retreats for a month to the pastoral setting at Painswick a week afterward, Thoby immediately goes “bugging,” with Virginia often in tow. “Marbled whites” are set, the “mythical commas” pursued, and Virginia “botanises” in the garden with her father.²⁷⁹ Such activities had become routine and ritual, at once escape and remembrance.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 105.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 124.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 51.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 136. Specifically, Woolf mentions 1897-1904, from Stella’s death to her father’s.

²⁷⁹ *A Passionate Apprentice* 112-131.

²⁸⁰ Forty years later, Jack Hills, who had been out of Virginia Woolf’s life for decades save the chance meeting in public, sent Woolf a present: a mounted specimen of a death’s head moth. When he died five months later, he restored Stella’s legacy and bestowed it to the remaining Stephen children whom he had taught to sugar trees.

The 1899 summer at Warboys, which included that final “sugaring campaign,” is the last of the summer before their exposure to the Cambridge personages who would become the social heart of Bloomsbury. The Thoby of Bloomsbury was short-lived, however, and his unexpected death from Typhoid Fever in 1906, at the heels of her father’s death in 1904, became a loss of the male figures in the family that ran a parallel course to the maternal losses of 1895 and 1897. Thoby’s death, in fact, seems to usher Virginia Stephen’s entrance into fiction, to sever the Virginia Stephen who was the daughter of Leslie Stephen, sister of Thoby Stephen, from the Virginia Stephen who would become Virginia Woolf, the writer. The previous deaths were what drew Thoby and Virginia closer, even with the tension that it produced in their intellectual quibbling: “It seems to me therefore that our relation (Thoby’s and mine) was more serious than it would have been without those deaths...It was behind our arguments,” Woolf writes in her memoir.²⁸¹ She describes herself drawing closer to something apart from the usual portrayals of grief and human relations: “I would see (after Thoby’s death) two great grindstones (as I walked round Gordon Square) and myself between them....So I came to think of life as something of extreme reality. And this of course increased my sense of my own importance. Not in relation to human beings; in relation to the force which had respected me sufficiently to make me feel myself ground between grindstones.”²⁸²

As vague an abstraction that “force” remains here, it is a word freighted with meaning in Woolf’s formulation of her childhood. It resonates with the same force opposing the moth that batters against the windowpane in “The Death of a Moth,” and it recalls the “violent shocks” Woolf famously uses to distinguish her “moments of being” from the non-descript quotidian of “non-being.” She cites the instance of a fight with Thoby, where they pummel each other until

²⁸¹ *Moments of Being*, p. 137-8.

²⁸² *Ibid.* 137.

she feels “why hurt another person?” and lowers her guard and allows him to beat her. This results in a state of despair, but there are other shocks whose intensity bring about satisfaction, and here is where Woolf transforms experience into something that might be interpreted as the source of her art. When looking at a plant with leaves, it “seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower.”²⁸³ Both, whether in despair or satisfaction, are “discoveries,” and in time, they become valuable because “a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it.”²⁸⁴

Woolf calls these revelations in other instances “ecstasies or raptures,” sudden shocks of despair or satisfaction. She describes the childhood years before the death of her mother as that “space of time which lasted from 1882 to 1895,” punctuated by “several violent moments of being, always including a circle of the scene which they cut out.” She likens her early years to “a great hall” or later “that great Cathedral space which was childhood,” but in retrospect shows dissatisfaction in the stasis and permanence these images imply:

But somehow into that picture must be brought, too, the sense of movement and change.

Nothing remained stable long. One must get the feeling of everything passing at different rates of speed past the little creature; one must get the feeling that made her press on, the little creature driven on as she was by growth of her legs and arms, driven without her being able to stop it, or to change it, driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, buds swell. That is what is indescribable, that is what makes all images too static, for no sooner has one said this was so, than it was past and altered. How immense must be the force of life which turns a baby, who can just

²⁸³ *Ibid.* 71.

²⁸⁴ 71-72.

distinguish a great blot of blue and purple on a black background, into the child who thirteen years later can feel all that I felt...when my mother died.²⁸⁵

Growth and transformation happen without bidding, as organically as the sprout bursting from the seed or the moth from the chrysalis. Woolf's wonder—at the seeming permanence of those sudden moments of intensity that are just as soon vanquished—is almost inexhaustible. There is no permanence or a fully conceived stability in Woolf, but there is the permanent conflict between feelings of stasis and feelings of transformation in her writing. Even in this cocoon of her childhood, this sealed enclosure that Woolf makes of the years before her mother's death, the force, both of death and of life, imposes and impresses a destiny independent of the self's own constructions. This is the development of an identity and a mother at the center of the great, vast space that seemed her youth.

The entirety of "A Sketch of the Past," in fact, has this organic feeling, this bursting through the chrysalis that is forestalled by a lingering nostalgia. So many of Woolf's portraits of her childhood hang suspended, as they do in her first memory of hearing the waves crashing on the shore through her nursery window at Talland house, half-awake, half-asleep, a memory which Woolf likens to "lying in a grape and seeing through a film of semi-transparent yellow."²⁸⁶ In Woolf's renderings, sights and sounds come through with a muffled intensity, curved like a "petal or leaf," all "globular; semitransparent." Nothing is sharp or distinct in this "elastic, gummy air." All these memories "hang together at St. Ives....all seemed to press voluptuously against some membrane; not to burst it."²⁸⁷ Woolf's "moments of being" and "non-being" have the same configuration. The reader is meant to elicit that these "separate moments of being" are "embedded in many more moments of non-being," which Woolf goes on to figure as "a kind of

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 79.

²⁸⁶ *MOB* 65.

nondescript cotton wool”—²⁸⁸Woolf’s threaded chrysalis of non-being, in other words, through which the moments of being lay bare and emerge. Something in all of this recalls Shakespeare’s elegiac lines in *Cymbeline*, which she thought the most beautiful in all his work, in “almost in any play I should think,” beautiful enough for her to rewrite them in a letter to Thoby when he left her for Cambridge: “Imogen says—Think that you are upon a rock, and now throw me again! And Posthumous answers--Hang there like fruit, my Soul, till the tree die.”²⁸⁹ In *Jacob’s Room*, Woolf has Jacob Flanders, her first fictional portrait of Thoby, repeat these lines with a drinking buddy en route to Greece, just before the outbreak of war. Woolf wrote “Reading” in the months when she was contemplating how to write *Jacob’s Room*, where the room and its accumulations remain suspended in time but are emptied of Jacob.

✱4.8: RE-“READING”—THWARTED METAMORPHOSIS AND NARRATIVE RUPTURE

This lengthy interruption of reading “Reading” could simply be viewed as biographical lore of a cursory interest, a suggestive allusion or two that works its way back into Woolf’s essays and fiction, if Woolf did not give these personal reverberations of the childhood moths such emphasis. Woolf’s multiple, associative metaphors of the broken chrysalis of her childhood break ground for a new narrative form embedded like a seed in the moth-hunting scene of “Reading.” Given the manner that the personal and the historical are interwoven in Woolf’s writing, it becomes apparent that the autobiomorphic²⁹⁰ process of her narrative technique requires in its configurations some violence, some rupture of the closed forms. In a summation of her private losses towards the end of “A Sketch of the Past,” Virginia Woolf asks whether it would have been better “To be family surrounded; to go on exploring and adventuring

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 66.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 70-71.

privately while all the while the family as a whole continued its prosaic, rumbling progress; would this not have been better than to have had that protection removed; to have been tumbled out of the family shelter; to have had it cracked and gashed...” This crack or gash is also precisely analogous to what Woolf calls her “shock-receiving capacity” that she asserts later is what makes her a writer.²⁹¹ Her scenes derived from exceptional moments, shocking in the “satisfaction or despair are not altogether a literary device....Is this ability of mine to scene receiving the origin of my writing impulse?”²⁹² She goes on:

But whatever the reason may be, I find that scene making is my natural way of marking the past. A scene always comes to the top; arranged; representative. This confirms me in my instinctive notion—it is irrational; it will not stand argument—that we are sealed vessels afloat upon what it is convenient to call reality; at some moments, without a reason, without an effort, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality—for they would not survive so many ruinous years unless they were made of something permanent; that is a proof of their “reality”.²⁹³

Woolf’s earlier scenes portrayed as “moments of being” suggest that in writing her memoir, she notices for the first time the profound difference between moments of despair and satisfaction; but compare the above to the following passage from “Reading.” Woolf uses the same shock-value to offer analysis of the night’s moth-hunting between the two days of reading:

And then, standing there with the moth safely in our hands, suddenly a volley of shot rang out, a hollow rattle of sound in the deep silence of the wood which had I know not what of mournful and ominous about it. It waned and spread through the forest; it died

²⁸⁹ 5 November 1901, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I* (HBJ: New York, 1976) 45.

²⁹⁰ A term coined by Robert Milder to define the authorial process of transforming autobiography into fiction.

²⁹¹ MOB, 72.

²⁹² MOB, 72, 142.

²⁹³ MOB, 142.

away, then another of those deep sighs arose. An enormous silence succeeded. “A tree,” we said at last. A tree had fallen.

What is it that happens between the hour of midnight and dawn, the little shock, the queer uneasy moment, as of eyes half open to the light, after which sleep is never so sound again? Is it experience, perhaps—repeated shocks, each unfelt at the time, suddenly loosening the fabric? Breaking something away? Only this image suggests collapse and disintegration, whereas the process I have in mind is just the opposite. It is not destructive whatever it may be, one might say that it was rather of a creative character.²⁹⁴

The repeated shocks described in both passages are presented as the source and the process of her creative capacities as writer. Irrational? Yes, in the sense that in both the “cracking” of the sealing matter and the “loosening” of the fabric, the images suggest collapse and disintegration. The “sealed vessels” are flooded and ruined. Woolf inverts the logical conclusion of the conceit by transforming the destructive imagery into a “creative character” that survives the “ruinous years.” The foray of her characters into the woods becomes in essence the intrusion of nature into the inner world of her characters. In “Reading,” the crack of the tree and the crack of dawn restore order: “one wakes, after heaven knows what internal process, with a sense of mastery... Through the tremor and vibration of daily custom one discerns bone and form, endurance and permanence. Sorrow will have the power to effect this sudden arrest of the fluidity of life, and joy will have the same power.”²⁹⁵ This is why Woolf afterward as a writer always “welcomes” these sudden shocks. An image that at first reads as a thwarted metamorphosis receives a second transformation: “I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I

²⁹⁴ *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* 168-169.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 169.

thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool.” The process of scene-making actually creates a new form, “a great delight” in putting “the severed parts together”...”making a scene come right; making a character come together.” From it, Woolf famously espouses the closest thing she claims to own as her own philosophy:

At any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about the vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock.²⁹⁶

Many, many critics have responded to this conception of Woolf’s art, but what goes unnoticed is how organic Woolf’s conception is when taken in its totality, and how closely bound it remains to naturalistic settings. One of Mark Hussey’s central arguments in *The Singing of the Real World* is that Woolf’s abstraction of reality in her works, that tendency towards the ecstatic rapture of mystic heights, is “distinguished from mysticism by its rootedness in lived experience.”²⁹⁷ She, like Conrad, did not need to imagine a supernatural world; there was enough wonder in the natural. The enclosed vessel burst open, the earlier scene of the moth and the cracking of the tree, are regenerative and organic in a manner that is meant to suggest that the images of the seed and the broken chrysalis partake of a natural process. Finding her form for the novel, for any work of art, replicates this pattern.

✧ **4.9: TRANSITIONS—*HANG THERE LIKE FRUIT, MY SOUL, TIL THE TREE DIE***

²⁹⁶ MOB 72

When Woolf's shock of despair or satisfaction, this pattern-making organic process embodied in the narrative experience of "Reading," is conjoined with the sequence of experimentations happening in her short stories beginning with "Kew" and "Mark," the larger, inaugural pattern of Woolf's mature writing process emerges as well. As argued in Chapter Three, the interruptions of thought in "The Mark on the Wall" and the interludes of the snail in "Kew Gardens" have a Darwinian resonance and temporal framework. In "Reading," the unexpected digression into moth-hunting serves as both interruption and interlude, at once a disruption of the narrative mode and its connective tissue that binds the first day of reading to the second, the Elizabethan past to the more recognizable authors of the present. In the stories, a vegetative life spreads and an insect presence crawls out of the woodwork of civilization as the stories move into the more provincial woods of house and garden. The insects traverse the stalks and the butterflies flutter through the arbors of Kew. The narrator's reverie over trees at the end of "Mark" includes the cold feet of insects making "laborious progresses up the creases of the bark" and sunning themselves "upon the green awning" of the leaves: even after the fibres snap and the branches break, "there are a million patient watchful lives still for a tree," she muses.²⁹⁸ Not the tree of knowledge in a Biblical Eden, this is Darwin's evolutionary tree of life.

Nature's presence in the dead of night is even more pronounced in the interlude of "Reading." The insects appear animatedly under the trees where the moths are being hunted: "there emerged here a grasshopper, there a beetle, and here again a daddy longlegs," awkwardly heading for the light in a manner that "made one think of sea creatures crawling on the floor of the sea" and "scrambling from all quarters" (166). The darkness "buries under it a great part of the human spirit" and "these evidences of unseen lives" seem hostile and alien because the

²⁹⁷ *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (Columbia: (Ohio State University Press, 1986) 97.

woods are evidently “preoccupied with matters in which human beings could have no part” (165-168). In “Reading,” too, as in “Mark,” the tree dies, the “fibres snap,” and the sound of the tree falling like “a volley of shot” rings out and breaks the reveries. The tree breaks just after the Red Underwing moth is safely captured and secured in its poison pot: “There was a flash of scarlet within the glass. Then he composed himself with folded wings. He did not move again.” (168). When the Red Underwing was still alive, astride the tree and “drinking deep,” “he was almost still...so immobile.” (167). As argued here, the intrusion of nature that interrupts the narrative has a formative, creative capacity.

But the death of the moth and the death of the tree are also a heightened awareness of finality, and the lantern that cuts through the darkness, that illuminates these unseen lives with no stake in humanity, serves to illuminate the small stake of reality that humanity bears. For all of Woolf’s abeyance of closure in her works, death is immanent. Gillian Beer argues that prehistory is “contiguous, continuous, a part of ordinary present-day life” in Woolf, and evolutionary prehistory is also “time without narrative, its only story a conclusion. That story is extinction.”²⁹⁹ Like the “waters of annihilation” in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, comforting one moment and menacing the next, the darkness threatens to engulf the human presences. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Peter envisions the evening as “ominous,” as if “some august fate, known to them, awaited without fear, were about to sweep them into complete annihilation.” Clarissa has “a perpetual sense...that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day.” But “did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; [...] of being laid out like a

²⁹⁸ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 90-95, 88-89.

²⁹⁹ *The Common Ground*, 9.

mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist.”³⁰⁰ This was to come. In “Reading,” the force of life—“we were surrounded by life, innumerable creatures were stirring among the trees”—is also the force of death on its evolutionary branches. Woolf’s recurrent images remain rooted in the natural world and the deep, cosmic time of evolution. Mark Hussey notices that in Woolf, “Abstract, impersonal beauty resides in the natural world.” He argues that “the uncivilized earth is invariably an emblem of timelessness in the novels,”³⁰¹ but it is the deep *fullness* of time evident in the natural world void of humans that creates its beauty. Impersonal beauty can be perceived, Hussey continues, “by those who recognize emptiness at the heart of life,” but Woolf does not complete the circle of being cut out of non-being. Rather, the cut in time is individual, like consciousness itself, quick like the individual life and the moment, a mere interval in the perpetuity of all existence. “Hang there like fruit, my soul,/ Till the tree dies” embraces the reverberations of both the chrysalis and the Darwinian tree in Woolf’s imagery. The continual growth, the organic presence, and still there is death on the tree, perhaps of the tree itself.

The severance of the tree, then, like the emergence from the chrysalis and eventually the capture of the moth in “Reading,” all come to symbolize the precariousness of the moment (the moment a metonym for the rapidity of life itself). So, too, its beauty: those lines from *Cymbeline* that haunt Woolf from the early age she read it and wrote it to Thoby, and that resonate with her own vision of childhood hanging still in her memory, capture this duality of experience. The moment—the fruit, the membrane, chrysalis, the semi-transparent envelope—hangs suspended *there* until the tree (in its slow, continuous evolutions of growth and rings and branchings) dies. Substitute the tree with water, and it becomes rhythmic, continuous, and soothing before it

³⁰⁰ *Mrs. Dalloway*, 58, 8-9.

³⁰¹ *The Singing of the Real World*, 151-2

engulfs and annihilates. The urge to hang suspended, to hang still, to float, to forestall time and movement, swells in Woolf's narratives, but they all at some point break, crack, sever, flood. Death is also Woolf's mother of beauty.³⁰² The structure of the narrative itself comes to recapitulate this pattern.

But the order that is restored by such sudden arrests in life has a mimetic correlative in the sudden arrests of Woolf's narrative. The moth that is captured after resuming its flight falls into its jar, the shape that contains it. Its death a still life, the Red Underwing now permanently evokes in the narrator the narrative of its flight and capture. When Woolf writes that sorrow and joy will have the "power to effect this sudden arrest of the fluidity of life," she follows it with this observation: "or [the sudden arrest] may come without apparent cause, imperceptibly, much as some bud feels a sudden release in the night and is found in the morning with all its petals shaken free."³⁰³ The enigmatic ending of the essay, a meditation on "the region of beauty," only makes sense when rejoined with the night interlude of moth hunting: "...perhaps one of the invariable properties of beauty is that it leaves in the mind a desire to impart. Some offering we must make; some act we must dedicate, if only to move across the room and turn the rose in the jar, which, by the way, has dropped its petals."³⁰⁴ As order is restored after the interlude, what Woolf likens to the organic bursting forth of the flower-bud, an apprehension of beauty like the flower's, (or the tree's, or the moth's), requires a correspondent shock or violence. The rose in the jar at the end is, well, in the jar, (like the moth in its poison pot), a cut flower arranged and composed for the narrator's and our aesthetic appreciation. The tree, however, dies without our bidding, equally a shock that propels the readers' need (ours and the narrator's) for order. The rose composed, in the last words, "has dropped its petals." Form that has been severed from an

³⁰² Wallace Stevens' line, "Death is the mother of beauty," from "Sunday Morning."

³⁰³ "Reading," 169.

organic whole, (Woolf's moment of being when she thinks for the first time "part-earth, part flower, that is the whole"), is arranged into something beautiful. That aesthetic completion is a kind of death.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*179.

* 4.10: SOLID SHIFTINGS AND SHIFTING SOLIDS—EVOLUTIONARY PLATONISM AND AESTHETIC DARWINISM

There is another overlapping pattern—the Greek--that suggests overlapping origins, and the tension between the Greek and Darwinian will be the remaining focus. In the novels after the early short stories, there is always the interval that cuts into the narrative time, and the interruptive cut is some discernment of the pattern. In *Between the Acts*, the final fictional culmination of Woolf's scene-making, the structure is plain enough in the play whose acts mimetically represent the *mise en abyme* of the novel. In the scene that makes the transition from the Victorian age to the present, when it was time to go "home," one of the audience members thinks this in the interval:

...why had it perished? Time went on like the hands of the kitchen clock...If they had met with no resistance, she mused, nothing wrong, they'd still be going round and round and round. The Home would have remained; and Papa's beard, she thought, would have grown and grown; and Mama's knitting—what did she do with all her knitting?—Change had to come, she said to herself, or there'd have been yards and yards of Papa's beard, of Mama's knitting [...].change had to come, unless things were perfect; in which case she supposed they resisted Time.

Something must act and cut into the perpetual growth, and modernity itself cuts away from the Victorian past—"Nowadays," Mrs. Lynn Jones remembers, "her son-in-law was clean shaven." Ann Banfield argues that "The cut is the rejection of duration; there is no change without it. Papa's beard and Mama's knitting, like Mrs. Ramsay's brown stocking, symbols of endless becoming, meet a Greek fate that gives them the form of physical time."³⁰⁵ The Greek ideal as it is cut and sculpted by Woolf is her great resistant to time. While it is clear in Woolf's

formulations that Greek fate also meets a Darwinian fate (more on this to come), it is a thought that catches at its origin the dynamic between the solid and the shifting in Woolf.

Woolf's voluminous early and continuously steady reading of Greek, Plato in particular, brings to mind this pattern of permanence emanating from nature. As early as 1903, Woolf suggests this when she writes, "I think I see for a moment how our minds are all threaded together—how any live mind today is of the very same stuff as Plato's and Euripides. It is only a continuation & development of the same thing. It is this common mind that binds the whole world together; & all the world is mind."³⁰⁶ This, Woolf continues, feels as though she has "grasped the central meaning of the world," but it only takes a "speck of dust" in the "machine" before the essential grasping of form disintegrates: "I open my Greek book next morning, & feel worlds away from it all—worse than that—the writing is entirely indifferent to me."³⁰⁷ The solidity of any insight gained, the pattern revealed, is momentary, but in Plato, the ideal forms are the original patterns, and the natural world a vast array of multi-form copies made in the image of the originals.³⁰⁸ To get at truth or beauty or the good in Plato is to find what is eternal, universal. It is the opposite of evolutionary theory, where pattern in nature, the replicating process, invariably means variety and mutability, where forms in nature are never "moving image[s] of eternity."³⁰⁹ And yet, the value Woolf derives from not just Plato but what might best be described as the "Greek ideal" proves as significant, just as multiform and varied as her use of Darwinian theory in her early narrative development and experimentation. There is an element of Platonic form, what one might call Platonic pattern, in Woolf's evolutionary narrative form. Some guise of it can be found in nearly all of Woolf's novels. If this aspect of Platonism

³⁰⁵ "Tragic Time," 61.

³⁰⁶ *A Passionate Apprentice*, 175.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

³⁰⁸ Several of Plato's dialogues make this argument for universal or ideal forms. See, for instance, *Parmenides* and the *Phaedo*.

³⁰⁹ from *Timaeus*, 37c-e, Jowett translation.

contradicts the tenets of evolution on an empirical basis, even seems “irrational” to Woolf in her own self-assessment of its usefulness, it makes perfect aesthetic sense in Woolf’s formation of a dynamic movement between moments of being and non-being, design and vision.

Woolf, indeed, at one level defines the “Greeks” themselves as a kind of Platonic type, as “the originals”: “the stable, the permanent, the original human being is to be found there.”³¹⁰ In “Reading,” as argued in the previous chapter, the evolution of English literature moves from the unconscious and impersonal manner of the Elizabethans to the self-conscious blushes of Modernity, not only in the shapes the sentences take but in the rapid emergence and insistence upon the personal intrusion of the “I” in literature. “Sir Thomas Browne brings in the whole question, which is afterwards to become of such importance, of knowing one’s author. Somewhere, everywhere, now hidden, now apparent in whatever is written down is the form of a human being” (175). Shifting the context slightly to compare the modern literary mind to the Greek, Browne’s most famous work, *Vulgar Errors*, in fact sets out to correct many of the assumptions made about the natural sciences since the time of Aristotle. Of the Elizabethans, Woolf’s narrator reads no self-consciousness in their use of the personal pronoun, and with the Greeks, Woolf notes, “It scarcely presents itself at all.”³¹¹ This is why Woolf suggests in “On Not Knowing Greek” that Greek literature is *the* impersonal literature: “Those few hundred years that separate John Paston from Plato, Norwich from Athens, make a chasm which the vast tide of European chatter can never succeed in crossing.” Woolf can read Chaucer and be “floated up insensibly on the current of our ancestors’ lives,” just as she can dimly chart the transformations from the early Elizabethans to the Edwardians, but “the Greeks remain in a fastness of their

³¹⁰ “On Not Knowing Greek,” *The Common Reader*, 27.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

own.”³¹² It is in this sense Woolf maintains that the Greeks are “the originals, Chaucer’s the variety of the human species.”³¹³ To be natural is to be unself-conscious in Woolf, and the great writers, beginning with the Greeks, “have this large way with them, nature’s way; which we who are further from nature call cruel, since we suffer more from the effects of cruelty, or at any rate judge our suffering of greater importance, than they did.”³¹⁴ This is often the ideal Woolf creates out of Greek character and literature when she “wants what is timeless and contemporary,” when she wants to “anchor” her mind in Greek.

The idea of “Greek,” as Woolf comes to employ it structurally, becomes symbolic in Woolf of an ideal type of artistic form—those aspects of experience that square with Woolf’s feeling for Platonic philosophy and Greek literature, a “cut and clarified” sensibility and aesthetic that “hardens” in the manner that Woolf describes how a dialogue in Plato “intensifies into truth.”³¹⁵ There is no vagueness, no clouds in its vision: the Greeks are as “logical as the sun,” to use Woolf’s phrasing in *A Room of One’s Own*. Throughout Woolf’s diaries, novels, and essays, “Greek” resonates with the feeling of solidity anchored in the shifting tendencies of a time bent on change and transformations: “. . .it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of the vagueness, of the confusion,” Woolf writes.³¹⁶ It is an intriguing dynamic of thought in Woolf, where a pattern that might best be defined as *Platonic* in form emanates from the broken seals, fragments, cracked casings, and vessels that sever the moment from an otherwise continuous flux of sensations and trivialities that Woolf dubs “non-being.” Where much of life is lived unconsciously, involuntarily, the moment of being shocks Woolf into an awareness of the pattern hidden behind the cotton wool of existence. The paradox—that this awareness at

³¹² CR, 23.

³¹³ CR, 27.

³¹⁴ “Reading,” 178-9.

³¹⁵ CR, 32.

³¹⁶ CR, 38.

once supplies an apprehension of the beautiful even as it interrupts the reverie that comes closest to the *feeling* of the beautiful.

This is the difference between a moment of vision and a moment of being in Woolf. Change comes in the finality of the moment that cannot be sustained. It is where quick time and deep time intersect, where Ricoeur's cosmic time and lived time stitch their most vulnerable seam in narrative configuration. These moments of being must be transmuted to moments of vision. Both vision and being are subsumed by non-being, a quickening awareness of beauty and of nothingness. If awareness of vision strikes into stability the Platonic, intelligible forms, awareness of being accepts in its post-Darwinian knowledge that the moment passes and is no more. The moment of vision stays the irreversibility of dying, though it cannot reverse it. Such ultimately in the final chapters will be the focus— of how Woolf's early Greek studies intersect with her reading of Darwin and evolution, and how the two of them inform one of the great intellectual debates of Modernity that Woolf's writing internalizes and structurally represents.

✧Chapter Five✧

The Victorian Inheritance of the Greek Ideal in Early Woolf: Dialogue and Gender in “Pentelicus” and “Phyllis & Rosamond”

✧ 5.1: A GREEK OF HER OWN:

Greek is more than an idea of fixed forms or ideals of truth impervious to time in Woolf’s fictional universe. To review, Woolf saw early on that the evolutionary aspects of time and change had inherent affinities with narrative and character. I have argued that much of Woolf’s early writing grapples thematically with the particular problems and challenges Darwin’s evolutionary theory poses *after* its impact had been absorbed and gradually accepted or domesticated into myth. Gillian Beer’s excellent essay, “Virginia Woolf and Prehistory,” examines just how closely Woolf read Darwin, especially *The Voyage of the Beagle*, from which Beer finds many allusions to and correspondences with Woolf’s own *Voyage*.³¹⁷ The previous chapters aver that Woolf’s growing subversion of conventional plot as a narrative structure, the kind of conventional structure which sustained her first two novels, has Darwin as a principle origin. It is one of Woolf’s great manifestic assertions that narration in her time had indeed become a problem, writing in 1919 that “...we go on perseveringly, conscientiously, constructing our thirty-two chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds.”³¹⁸ Convention dictated the old Aristotelian unities and the Platonic notion of internal logic and artistic form, but if “one were free and could set down what one chose, there would be no plot, little probability, and a vague general confusion....”³¹⁹

³¹⁷ “Virginia Woolf: *The Common Ground*, Gillian Beer, (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. Press, 1996) 6-28.

³¹⁸ “Modern Novels,” *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (New York: HBJ) 33.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Woolf, in doing so, did not simply shirk off Platonic or Victorian notions of artistic unity in embracing Darwin's temporal upheaval. The ancient Greeks in general, and Plato specifically, come to represent major aspects of Victorian England in Woolf's fiction, particularly the patriarchal structures of English education and power that considered the acquisition and mastery of Greek as a prominent indication of distinction, gender, class, and accomplishment. Greek (and Latin) assured the English public schoolboy his rightful place as inheritor of British colonialism and empire. For Woolf, Queen Victoria notwithstanding, there were no heiresses vouchsafed a Greek education or pride in the empire. Nothing bears this out more than Woolf's own childhood and educational experience. Learning Greek was a compulsory course of study but also a right that her brothers acquired through public schools and Cambridge, while Virginia Stephen as a woman did not. This male assumption to the glory that was Greece is often noted in Woolf, nowhere more satirically and succinctly than in her early Platonic sketch "A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus" (1906). A group of young Englishmen descending the mountain agree upon this sentiment: "For to call a man a tourist when you meet him abroad is to define not only his circumstance but his soul...Germans are tourists and Frenchmen are tourists but Englishmen are Greeks."³²⁰ Later, they not only share wine with "the escort of dirty Greek peasant boys but condescended so far as to address them in their own tongue as Plato would have spoken it had Plato learned Greek at Harrow" (64).

And yet patriarchy and its engendered exclusions did not prevent Woolf from assiduously learning Greek on her own, beginning at the age of 15, or from reading and assimilating the ideas of Darwin on her own. Plato and Darwin, Greek literature and natural history were fields of study essential to Woolf's intellectual and aesthetic development, and they become essential to her development of a feminist literature. Out of these dual and shifting engagements, what I will

³²⁰ *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick. (New York, HBJ, 1989), p. 63.

ultimately establish in the ensuing chapters is that Woolf's departures from conventional plot and narrative, her distinctive shaping of a modern poetics, significantly evolves from her acquisition and transformation of these two male university pursuits for the uses and advantages of women. In order to do so, it is important to also admit and acknowledge how, in agreement with Pamela Caughie and many of Woolf's most astute critics, Woolf's writings offer "a dynamic model for narrative rather than a dualistic one."³²¹ Woolf's ambivalent, indeterminate, and sometimes contradictory figuration and use of Greek underlies her ambivalence over any set, determined structure to writing. Her valuing of process over conclusions and any straightforward methodology requires multiple and multiform associations and meaning in regard to the "Greek" to be explored and related to her Darwinian narrative. There are many iterations of Hellenism in Woolf's great passion and contemplation of the Grecian past and the social currency it occupies in British culture by the turn of the century, especially the private and public exchange of the Greek ideal that Woolf employs.

Two of her first four completed stories in particular—"A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus" and "Phyllis and Rosamond" both written in 1906—illustrate the formative role Greek would come to found in her fiction and her personal life. They establish how Woolf is beginning to think about the difference gender makes in the acquisition of *learning* Greek, and perhaps more importantly how appropriating her own idea (if not ideal) of Greek literature and antiquity required a necessary departure not just from the Greek past but the Victorian. This is what the most thoroughgoing scholar of Woolf's Greek studies, Theodore Koulouris, has come to view as Woolf's "Greekness" that early on merges the personal, the educational, and the

³²¹ *Refiguring Modernism, Volume Two: Postmodern Feminist Readings of Woolf, West, and Barnes*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott, Indiana UP, 1995, p. 178.

socio-cultural.³²² At play always is the serious, often satirical juxtaposition of classical Greece and contemporary England as Woolf came to know it through her own Greek studies and the exposure to this Cambridge Apostolic sect. The early works from the summer to fall of 1906, from which all of her very earliest unpublished forays at fiction begin appearing in her notebooks, anticipate and ultimately include the seminal September voyage to Greece. She would mine her travel journal entries from this trip for many stories to come, including most famously *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*. “A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus” and “Phyllis and Rosamond” are the early fruits of these labors—the former a richly textured and deeply informed satire that lays bare the masculine Greek ideal as it had been derived from all the educational and cultural accumulations of Victorian England; and the latter a fictional exposition on how a version of that Greek ideal could come home to England in the open exchange of ideas between men and women through dialogue, and how this might be applicable to women (and men) in the new century.

***5.2: CAMBRIDGE SYMPOSIUMS—THE EARLIEST FICTIONS**

A familiar narrative in Woolfian lore recalls the significance of her exposure to Thoby Stephen's Cambridge friends shortly after her father's death in 1904, and the subsequent move of the Stephen siblings to 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury. The importance of this event is emphasized for good reason, not least because of Woolf's own account in her Memoir Club reading, “Old Bloomsbury.”³²³ The dusky, dark furniture and cramped atmosphere of 22 Hyde Park Gate were replaced by open, airy spaces and white walls simply adorned. Voluble but

³²² “Greekness” is Theodore Koulouris' term for Woolf's multifaceted brand of Hellenism. Koulouris closely examines just about every aspect of Woolf's Greek studies and writes, “Woolf's Greekness resists clear-cut and finished formulations; suggesting that it was this or that would not do justice to its inherent complexity and persistent multi-facetedness.” *Hellenism and Loss in the Works of Virginia Woolf*, Vermont: Ashgate e-book, 2011, p. 5.

sidelong and mannered Victorian tea table conversations gave way to the coffee and whiskey of Thursday evening parties. Conversations languished, manners were eschewed, but dialogues and debates over the nature of good or beauty or reality lasted until two or three in the morning.³²⁴ These gatherings of the Stephen sisters and Thoby's Cambridge friends ultimately resulted in both Vanessa and Virginia's marriages—to Clive Bell and Leonard Woolf, respectively—and many of Virginia Woolf's most lasting personal, intellectual, and literary friendships were formed with the likes of Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, Saxon Sidney-Turner, and E. M. Forster. It was, in short, the early years of what the literary world now calls Bloomsbury.

Part of this narrative is, of course, the emergence of Virginia Woolf the writer. Out of her father's long shadow and into the light of these aesthetic and philosophical discussions, Woolf begins penning her first essays and reviews in 1904, with her earliest attempts to publish fiction soon to follow. Those young Cambridge men also brought along with them their Greek literature and classicist degrees, their ideas of the Cambridge philosophers, and their bible—Cambridge Don G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, just published in 1903. Moore, they felt, was their Socrates, and by following his philosophical model, they thought themselves the modern embodiment of the Greek ideal. The effect upon Virginia Woolf, by her own estimate, was profound. Despite the awkwardness and the naïve, cloistered idealism of these young men, the intellectual stimulation and, above all, the social, mental, and moral freedom Virginia Stephen enjoyed during this time cannot be overemphasized or much exaggerated.

But Virginia Woolf's exposure to Thoby's public school culture and her emergence as a writer on and student of Greek literature have a longer history than early Bloomsbury. When

³²³ *Moments of Being*, ed. and with an introduction by Jeanne Schulkind (New York: HBJ, 1985), p. 181-201.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 185-91.

reminiscing about Thoby in “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf mentions that her brother’s “Latin and Greek were very rough... Yet it was through him that I first heard about the Greeks.” Woolf vividly recalls the day Thoby came home from Evelyn’s grammar school and how he paced up and down the stairs telling her for the first time the stories of Hector and Troy.³²⁵ In October of 1897, three months after the death of her maternal stepsister Stella Duckworth, Adeline Virginia Stephen began taking a short course of classes in Greek at King’s College with the distinguished Greek scholar Dr. G.C.W. Warr. In fact, Greek was the young Virginia Stephen’s *only* systematic education outside her father’s library, provided by her paid tutorials from Clara Pater and then Janet Case from 1898 to 1903.³²⁶ Woolf recalls that during this period, every weekday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, she “settled down to read Plato, or to make out some scene in Euripides or Sophocles for Clara Pater, or Janet Case.”³²⁷ A year after Leslie Stephen’s death triggers Woolf’s second bout with mental illness, she picks up her Greek studies where the tutorials let off: “I am glad to find that I don’t forget Greek & read Thucydides which is tough, as easily as I ever did.”³²⁸ In the terser, matter of fact entries of Woolf’s early diaries, hardly a week goes by in those first months living in Bloomsbury without some Greek reference. She reads Greek, translates Greek, writes an essay on “The Magic Greek,”³²⁹ keeps a Greek notebook, and teaches Greek literature and history to her “working women” at Morley College. Of all the departures early Bloomsbury comes to represent for Woolf—the independence to write for a living, to leave her Victorian past for a Modernist present, to free herself from the domestic strictures of patriarchy, and certainly to rid herself from social outings and sexual malfeasances

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 125.

³²⁶ Woolf’s studies in Greek have been explored often, but her use of Plato nowhere more extensively than in Brenda Lyon’s thesis, *Textual Voyages: Platonic Allusions in Virginia Woolf’s Fiction*. Thesis, Balliol College, University of Oxford, Trinity, 1995. Future references to Lyons will be cited in text.

³²⁷ “22 Hyde Park Gate,” *Moments of Being*, 2nd ed., ed. by Jeanne Schulkind, (New York: HBJ, 1985), pp. 149-151.

³²⁸ February 2, 1905, *A Passionate Apprentice; The Early Journals 1897-1909*, ed. by Mitchell A Leaska (New York: HBJ, 1990), p. 228.

³²⁹ An essay that, sadly, has been lost.

instigated by stepbrother George Duckworth—Greek ranks among these significantly and is inextricably linked to the others, especially as it continues rather than severs the past.

Her studies culminate in a trip to Greece with her sister and brothers in 1906, and the experience, including the ensuing death of Thoby,³³⁰ figures largely in Woolf's fictional accounts of Englishmen reading or speaking Greek. To begin with, Plato's dialogues are the most prominent form of borrowed structure in many of her earliest attempts at fiction; by title alone we gather just how much it infuses Woolf's earliest, often incompleting stories written before 1917: "Phyllis and Rosamond," "A Dialogue on a Hill," "Theophile," and "A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus" all either recreate a Grecian setting or employ the Socratic method of questions and answers, including the congenial but serious philosophical conversation that Woolf admired in Plato.

In both her journal entry on "Pentelicus" as well as the story that borrowed from the experience, the satirical tone captures the unbridgeable chasm of time between Woolf's unaware, unattached English Cambridge graduates and their beloved classical Greece. The two major participants of Woolf's dialogue, clearly based upon her male siblings and travel companions Thoby and Adrian Stephen, consciously appropriate Greek antiquity as their own³³¹ while the story's narrator listens in and comments from a detached distance upon their manner, discourse, and action—all of which belies in the young men a cultivated arrogance and assumed superiority. It isn't simply that the twentieth century Greek peasants escorting Woolf's Englishmen up and down the famed mountain do not understand their employers' public schoolboy Greek; Woolf wants the entire scene to resonate with an historical and cultural context

³³⁰ Thoby contracted Typhoid fever on the trip, returning to London on October 21st while Virginia and Vanessa visited Constantinople. It was misdiagnosed as pneumonia. By November 20th, Thoby was dead.

³³¹ See S.P. Rosenbaum's definitive analysis of the biographical sources of the story in *Charleston Newsletter* No. 19 (Sept. 1987), 23-32.

that parodies the aspirations and assumptions to Grecian glory in these Cambridge types she had come to know through her brothers, especially after her move to Bloomsbury in 1904.

Mount Pentelicus, Woolf's narrator notes with her Baedeker,³³² is most famous as the marble quarry Athenian artists and architects mined for the pristine white-yellow hue of stone that came to ornament the sacred architecture of Athens and much of the most famous Attic sculpture from the Acropolis and the Parthenon; Pentelicus, in fact, was the original marble quarry from whence the Parthenon's poached Elgin Marbles derived; that they arrived in London, even then with great notoriety beginning in 1801, while Greece was still under control of the Ottoman Empire, is one of the primary reasons the study of classical Greece had a renaissance of its own in England. The temporal juxtaposition created from Woolf's two cultural and historical contexts is striking. Woolf writes,

Mount Pentelicus, as we who read Baedker know, yet bears on her side the noble scar that she suffered at the hands of certain Greek stone masons who had the smile and perhaps the curse of Pheidias as their reward of their labour. And so if you would do justice to her you must meditate on several separate themes and combine them as best you may. You must think of her not only as the outline that ran across many Greek casements—Plato looked up from his page on sunny mornings—but also as the workshop and as the living place where innumerable slaves wore out their lives. (63)

Woolf, then, has us imagine her English travelers alongside their “escort of dirty Greek peasant boys” hired to steer their donkeys and carry their portage up and down the mountain, a foreground to this envisioned backdrop of 5th Century Greece. Plato himself looks up from his writing and Phidias, the famed sculptor of antiquity and overseer of the marble selections

³³² *Greece* had been added to the famous Karl Baedeker travel book series in English by 1889.

incorporated into the Parthenon, works the slaves who quarry the mountain for him and the citizenry of Athens. Not lost on Woolf is how the enslaved stonemasons of Pentelicus find their contemporary correlative in the Greek peasants now employed by the British tourists. Even the donkeys are imagined ancestors of the beasts of burden stabled at Pentelicus's grotto to carry the marble to Athens over two millennia before. The "crude blocks of marble" remain that didn't make it to the sculptor's workshop or chisel when Greece was glorious; among the contemporary Greeks that the English deem "barbarians," a judgment they declare "Plato" himself "would have sanctioned,"³³³ a dialogue ensues.

Or a dialogue doesn't ensue: "But since dialogues are even more hard to write than to speak, and it is doubtful whether written dialogues have ever been spoken or spoken dialogues have ever been written, we will only rescue such fragments as concern our story. But this we will say, that the talk was the finest talk in the world."³³⁴ Just so, the story is riddled with playful jabs at the British tourists proclaiming, unbeknownst to them, their cultural superiority as the natural inheritors of Greek civilization; all the while their peripatetic speechifying follows not simply their descent from Pentelicus but from Plato's lofty dialectics. Conversations are at once disjointed and derivative, the poetic voice of Theocritus heard in the "plaint that it made on the stones..." Some of the English "did so hear it, albeit the text was dusty on the shelves at home."³³⁵ The echoes of the past persist, but the Greek words and works that envelop the present, whether dialogues or poems, cannot be refashioned for this Cambridge expedition.

The dialogue itself, or what there is of it, is interrupted by the unintended, intruding presence of a Greek monk "discharging the humble duties of the monastery nearby." Not in the

³³³ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 64. In Woolf's journal account of the ascent of Pentelicus, the epithet given to the Greek charges, when they initially attempted to not go all the way to the summit, is even less flattering. Woolf writes, "So English oath and Greek oath beat the air fruitlessly; for the Greek could not understand the Epithet 'squint eyed monkey' nor could we interpret the vigor of his language; Greek we reflected is devoid of meaning." (*Passionate Apprentice*, 323.)

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 65.

sublime moment derided as a member of the same ilk or race as “the dirty Greek peasants,” this figure instead cuts for them the shape of an entirely bygone presence: “So they saw that he was large and finely made, and had the nose and brow of a Greek statue...as he stood there, suspended, with open eyes, a fantastic—a pathetic—hope shot through the minds of some who saw him that his was one of those original figures which, dipped in the crude earth, have resisted time, and recall the first days and the unobliterated type: there might be such a thing as Man.”³³⁶ While it is “no longer within the power of the English mind,” the narrator muses, to make myths or gods of the moment—“to see fur grow upon smooth ears and cloven hoofs where there are ten separate toes”—what separates them in time and significance from the original Greeks that brought them to the slopes of Pentelicus in the first place, seems to disappear, if only for the moment—“And the English could not have told at the moment at which point they stood...the Greeks, that is Plato and Sophocles and the rest, were close to them, as close to them as any friend or lover, and breathed the same air as that which kissed the cheek and stirred the vine...”³³⁷ While nothing but one nicety is uttered, they imagine he spoke “as a Greek to a Greek”!

Ultimately Woolf’s narration ascribes to the monk’s presence an idealization equivalent to its Platonic origins. In the monk’s gaze is a “force of the eye that fixed them,” that “...was lit by another power which survives trees and even plants them.” Whether miracle or fact, “such a flame as that in the monk’s eye...had been lit once at the original hearth.”³³⁸ Promethean and Paterian in this moment of vision—“*This at least of flamelike our life has...of forces parting sooner or later on their ways*”—³³⁹ it immediately recalls Woolf’s diary entry a few years

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ 68.

³³⁸ 67-68

³³⁹ from Pater’s “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*.

previous, already quoted in another context, where reading Plato brings to mind “How I think I see for a moment how our minds are all threaded together....this common mind that binds the whole world together; & all the world is mind.” The light in the monk’s eye grows even more portent and fantastical, endowed with the power to make

the trees murmur and the air blow. And thousands of little creatures moved about in the grass, and the earth turned solid for miles and miles beneath the feet. Nor did the atmosphere begin and end with that day and that horizon, but it stretched like a lucid green river on all sides immeasurably and the world swam in its girdle of eternity. Such was the light in the brown monk’s eye, and to think of death or dust or destruction beneath its gaze was like placing a sheet of tissue paper in the fire. (67-68)

This reverie, shared by her narrator *as if* it were hers as well as her characters,’ is indeed Woolf’s first fully realized, fictionally rendered moment of vision, one that expands in dimension to the cosmic space and time of the universe itself and its “girdle of eternity.” A Platonic vision in deed, where the one and the many are, via Woolf’s narrative, contained within the one moment, where the vision of the monk creates not just an ideal type but a temporary unity of being. We see the monk, and time seems arrested, but sight is multiplied and nearly omniscient—living organisms abound and *move* in the arrested moment and time stretches to encompass the vastness of *time* (“And thousands of little creatures moved about in the grass, and the earth turned solid for miles beneath the feet...”) The vision and all that lights it, however, are curtailed by the astonishingly prosaic “good evening” greeting of the monk and the quotidian need expressed by the story’s final phrase whereby the logos that lit eternity becomes the

“lights” that were “opening in the streets of Athens and the talk was of supper and a bed.”³⁴⁰ The gaze that “pierced through much, and went like an arrow drawing a golden chain through ages and races...and stretched like a solid and continuous avenue from one end of time to the other” dims once again to the all too natural power of “the dusk that cuts short the Grecian day...like a knife across the sky.” By such approximations does Woolf draw down the moment, severed from time and then severed by time and the natural world. The moment sets and dissolves like the Greek ideal itself in the prosaic, natural, quotidian interests of night, supper, and bed.

What’s remarkable in this context, then, is how augmented the moment becomes to the undeserving, idealizing recipients, an illusory good fortune through an assumed inheritance and belief in themselves that cannot be said to have arisen from a good dialogue, at least in the Platonic formulation of a dialogue that the story’s title would indicate and is meant to suggest. And this is the point. It playfully partakes of Plato’s ideal form in such a thing as an unwitting monk, an otherwise occupied man standing before the travelers, if only because the monk has the semblance of Greek statuary, the imagined brow of a togaed philosopher. In a dialogue that never quite happens, where the scene and the conversation taper off before any conclusions can be drawn or any truths deduced or refined beyond the airing of opinions, the Cambridge set still has had their vision of Greece. Woolf’s interweaving of narrative voice and perspective with that of her Cambridge men, (an early glimpse at what would be more developed as a technique in the experimental brilliance of the fiction to come), provides our vision of her male siblings and Cambridge friends translated to fiction.

***5.3: A SYMPOSIUM OF HER OWN—CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES**

³⁴⁰ 68.

The same epiphanic moment or philosophic inquiry is not allotted the two title characters in “Phyllis and Rosamond,” Woolf’s first completed short story dated both in her notebook and in the story itself as “20th June, 1906,” a few months before her actual expedition to Greece and therefore predating “A Dialogue upon Mt. Pentelicus” by a few months. It nonetheless gives us Woolf’s first impressions of early Bloomsbury from a female’s perspective, with the Bloomsbury men this time in the backdrop, and the gender difference is, not surprisingly, essential. “Phyllis and Rosamond” is not a Platonic dialogue in form or in title, the pairing and ostensible “outline” of these two young women “drawn with no skill but veracity,” the narrator claims at the outset, though the tracing of a day in their life may still “possibly have some value,” because “such portraits as we have are almost invariably of the male sex...”³⁴¹ Rather than a satirical juxtaposition of the Cambridge youth and their Greek contemporaries and predecessors, Woolf instead contrasts two fictional versions of herself with either Victorian stock figures or Apostolic men in the background. The male assumptions become female encumbrances to the Greek ideal for the title characters. The narration, which presents her picture-making as akin to an historian’s or a biographer’s, is in so many respects an addition to Woolf’s autobiographical writings; the “little group” of characters given indeed provide two sides of Woolf’s own looking glass—the one refracting back just a few years previous when she was still ensconced in a Victorian house under the patriarchal wing of Leslie Stephen; and the other reflecting the woman and writer Woolf was becoming after nearly two liberating years living with her sister in Bloomsbury post-Leslie Stephen’s death in 1904. Phyllis and Rosamond Hibbert may as well be Vanessa and Virginia Stephen living at 22 Hyde Park Gate circa 1903, and Woolf makes clear that these ladies, “indigenous to the drawing room,” inhabit the Hyde Park, Kensington neighborhood of London as well, where they must play out their trade in their “professional

³⁴¹ Opening sentence and page of “Phyllis and Rosamond,” *Shorter Fiction*, 17.

arena” as “daughters at home” whose occupation is to land a gentleman and become wives at another landed home. Phyllis puts it bluntly enough: “We are daughters, until we become married women.”³⁴²

Woolf’s present image in the looking glass, at least as she saw herself and Vanessa in June of 1906, can be found in the Tristram sisters residing in “the unfashionable quarter” of Bloomsbury. The older Tristram sister, Vanessa’s surrogate, is described not surprisingly as “a young woman of great beauty, and an artist of real promise,” whereas Sylvia Tristram, the younger sister, indeed resembles Virginia Stephen settling into her fictional house of mirrors: “Sylvia who wrote and had a literary delight in seeing herself reflected in strange looking glasses, and of holding up her own mirror to the lives of others, settled herself to the task” of seeing the Hibbert sisters as “human beings” rather than “young ladies.”³⁴³

The contrast between the two mirrored images, between these two pairs of sisters, could not be starker. Phyllis and Rosamond embody the lives of young, upper middle class women in the early 20th Century still shackled to the traditions and conventions of Victorian England. They function squarely within the parlors, evening parties, and distinguished gatherings that, in practice, differ not at all from the Victorian patriarchal system and cultural framework that would have received these young women half a century before. Their day begins by dressing appropriately for breakfast and receiving a perfunctory kiss from their father before he disappears to read the paper and head to work. Then it is to mom’s room, where they “receive her orders for the day,” including the arrangement of flowers and of lunch and dinner with the cook. A small respite is interrupted when their father calculatingly invites two men home for lunch, one of them a marrying prospect, which means all their faculties must be employed in the

³⁴² *Ibid*, 27.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, 26-27.

ascertainment of his worth and, if necessary, the first stages of his procurement for the elder sister Phyllis. Sewing and errands and a proper changing of clothes ensue in preparation for the lunch, a success save that Phyllis finds their guest “not a bad little man,” (i.e., I don’t want to marry him), which compels Lady Hibbert to instruct her daughter in being “a little less selfish.”³⁴⁴ The next hour is a debriefing between sisters of their marrying prospects before it is time to “pay calls” with Lady Hibbert—“driving solemnly to one house after another where they had dined or hoped to dine...” before becoming a part of the carriage procession that circles around the statue of Achilles at Hyde Park before returning home. While they escape entertaining an elderly cousin in the parlor, Phyllis must join her parents at a dinner party of a distinguished judge by 8pm. After dinner, Phyllis has a rare late night escape from her life, receiving permission from Lady Hibbert (albeit with a pursed, disapproving frown!) to meet her sister Rosamond at the Tristrams.

No wonder, then, that Phyllis herself describes her own appearance and entrance into the Bloomsbury party as “like that of ladies whom Romney painted” a century before. It represents not just a different manner of dress, but an entirely different timeframe and era. By traversing London, Rosamond and the reader gain entrance into the Edwardian, if not yet Modernist world that Bloomsbury will come to represent—of “great tranquil squares” and “room” and “freedom” to “grow up as one liked.”³⁴⁵ She and her sister stand before the Bloomsbury artists and intellectuals as anachronisms: Phyllis wears white silk with cherry ribbons on her dress while her Bloomsbury host wears a hunting jacket. People sit on the floor in the smokey room engaged in debate about art, religion, literature, and love. Though Phyllis had seen the artwork in question, she “knew her platitudes would never stand the test of question and criticism.” All is heated and

³⁴⁴ 28.

³⁴⁵ 24.

serious but reasoned, and “no one of the combatants wished to be tripped by illogical devices.” Even after the hotly contested debate concludes, no one “apologizes” for the concentrated character and intense tenor, a shock to the system for Phyllis. Worse, the general conversation was “scornful of the commonplace” and the Hibbert sisters could not help but beat themselves up for an “instinctive disapproval” of the Tristram sisters uttering lightly (and jesting wholeheartedly) about some element of Christianity—“their education” through Lady Hibbert’s training and their station in life, Woolf suggests, “had stuck to them.” When Phyllis finally does find entrance into the conversation regarding literature, “she was surprised to find that her most profound discoveries were taken as the starting point of further investigations.”³⁴⁶ The moment that most amazes the Hibberts is when their “own department of business” (marriage) is discussed with such “freedom and frankness” between Miss Tristram (Vanessa’s character) and an interlocutor gentleman “who might easily, as far as one could judge, have a personal interest in the question.” Woolf conspicuously and discretely leaves the content of the conversation out of the narrative, but it does “put the whole thing in a new and sufficiently startling light.”³⁴⁷ That a woman would talk so freely and openly about love and marriage shifts the emotional response of the evening for the Hibberts from discomfort to silence. They stop speaking, unconsciously, and feel “condemned” to their own lives, incapable after “long captivity” to live and think freely themselves.³⁴⁸

And this is the point, or at least the point where the mirror cracks. Woolf’s two looking glass likenesses to her own life would always form a powerful dichotomy within her fiction and life writings. On or about December, 1910 might be the date Woolf famously declared human

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 24-25.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 25.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 28.

character changed,³⁴⁹ but October, 1904 initiates that change in Virginia Stephen. As a young woman writing in 1906, a few years out of her self-described Victorian captivity, the side that held her Bloomsbury image and identity was ideal (and idealized). The Victorian ladies embodied in the Hibberts, though given here a glimpse of what freedom could resemble and mean if reconstituted as the Tristram sisters, cannot escape their upbringing and education. The Phyllis and Rosamond world is indeed the one Virginia and Vanessa occupied at 22 Hyde Park Gate before October of 1904, but much more grotesquely with their molesting, overbearing, emotionally overwrought and status-seeking half-brother George Duckworth playing the part of Lady Hibbert. Woolf makes this quite explicit in her autobiographical pieces “22 Hyde Park Gate” and “Old Bloomsbury” (1920-22) presented to the Memoir Club during the formal reinstitution of Bloomsbury conversations and gatherings after the war in 1920.³⁵⁰ Whereas Hyde Park meant convention, Bloomsbury meant intellect. “In the world of the Booths and the Maxses we were not asked to use our brains much. Here we used nothing else,” Woolf writes in “Old Bloomsbury.” She goes on,

The young men I have named had no manners in the Hyde Park Gate sense. They criticized our arguments as severely as their own. They never seemed to notice how we were dressed or if we were nice looking or not. All that tremendous encumbrance of appearance and behavior which George [Duckworth] had piled upon our first years vanished completely. (*Moments of Being*, 190-91, brackets mine.)

³⁴⁹ from “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.”

³⁵⁰ See *Moments of Being*, pps. 161-201. The *many* critical readings of these two autobiographical pieces are too numerous to rehearse here, as they are the first and most explicit references Woolf makes regarding the incestuous and molesting advances of her step-brothers.

Woolf might satirize and lightly mock the earnestness and unconscious arrogance of her male siblings and Cambridge graduates as conquering tourists sitting atop Pentelicus and planting a British intellectual flag upon the ruins of classical Greece, but they at the least have the privilege of philosophical inquiry and a learned model of dialogue available to them.

For Phyllis, the question of love cannot be abstracted into an argument, or the whole contingent premise of marriage questioned beyond the gentleman most suitable to marry. When Phyllis and Sylvia do openly discuss marriage, not to argue or debate the merits of it but simply to gain an understanding of Phyllis's predicament, Phyllis lets go of what convention she can long enough to admit what marriage is to her versus what she imagines it ought to be. This Phyllis confides to Sylvia after the elder Tristram sister has openly debated the question with a gentleman: "It should be for love, and all the rest of it. But," continued Phyllis, desperately speaking the truth, "we can't think of it that way...It is always mixed up with so much else. It means freedom and friends and a house of your own, and oh all the things you have already!"³⁵¹ Naively, Sylvia replies that perhaps Phyllis should take up writing. If Woolf will argue two decades later that such freedom for a woman writer requires 500 pounds and a room of one's own,³⁵² here her Edwardian Sylvia has not yet analyzed why a Victorian Phyllis could not write under these conditions even if she were intellectually inclined to do so. Phyllis, at twenty-eight, already knows better, responding that even if she and her sister had the "brains" to write, "we couldn't use them."³⁵³ Therein lies the paradox, one Kafka might describe as a cage in search of a bird, a way out of father's prison by choosing a prison of one's own in the man who owns you; either way, the patriarchy has you.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

³⁵² Woolf's stated conclusion in *A Room of One's Own*, of course.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

More to this point, with Woolf's Greek studies and explorations as a backdrop, what both early stories begin to communicate is the difference between conversation and intellectual debate, forming dialogue for characters versus dialogue as character formation; that is, the Platonic idea of dialogue, an open dialogue, is a privileged, learned form of liberty available to men via their education (but not to women save those lucky enough to be liberated from their fathers and husbands, as in the fictional Tristrams or the actual Stephens from 1904-1906). That open exchange of ideas could be cultivated at university or men's intellectual societies, but the same freedoms could not transpire between two women or a man and woman without a major breach of convention and etiquette.

Woolf discusses this conversational difference most explicitly and reflectively in her memoir when revisiting the patriarchal conventions of her "Victorian" childhood that dictated social interaction and exchange between men and women. Here, it is teatime in Leslie Stephen's house, and the servant's bell has rung: "For then instantaneously we become young ladies possessed of a certain manner. . . . We should have first to make conversation. It was not argument, it was not gossip. It was a concoction, a confection; light; ceremonious; and of course unbroken. Silence was a breach of convention."³⁵⁴ Personally and socially, to *argue*, to formulate an educated inquiry out of any question, much less the concentrated questions requiring abstractions and daring—in the instance of "Phyllis and Rosamond" the question of love—was indeed a breach of convention, and the Hibbert sisters' lapse into silence simply indicates then the inability of the conventions inculcated in them to address and answer the conventions, Edwardian for Victorian, cultivated in the young men of Bloomsbury newly shot out of Cambridge. While Woolf holds the mirror up to her two natures, the one Hyde Park and the other Gordon Square—the divide is not bridged by the candid conversation, and by story's end the

Hibberts restlessly return with relief to the previous century that holds them. That gap in time and culture, from Victorian to Edwardian (or ultimately Modern) in so many guises, shapes, and literary manifestations, is one of Woolf's most consistent and persistent writing forays, her narratives in fiction and non-fiction always essaying to bridge, translate, transgress, embody what the times meant.

Are we far from the writer of *Mrs. Dalloway* who will envelop that instant—the Victorian past and the Modern present—with a tunneling process that allows her to swim and mine freely between the past and present? In “Phyllis and Rosamond” they could only be embodied by two sets of sisters looking at each other, in congress, rather than within the narrative mode and structure of her fiction that could gather such incongruities, dichotomies, and continuities within one character. Woolf's childhood itself, both the family structure and the cultural dynamic of familial roles, provides her an extraordinarily personal insight into social shifts as temporal constructs worth exploring and ultimately telling:

But from my present distance of time I see too what we could not then see—the gulf between us that was cut by our difference in age. Two different ages confronted each other in the drawing room at Hyde Park Gate. The Victorian Age and the Edwardian age. We were not his children; we were his grandchildren. There should have been a generation between us to cushion the contact. . . . Explorers and revolutionists as we [Virginia and Vanessa] were by nature, we lived under the sway of a society that was about fifty years too old for us. It was this curious fact that made our struggle so bitter and so violent. For the society in which we lived was still the Victorian society. Father himself was a typical Victorian. George and Gerald were consenting and approving

³⁵⁴ *Moments of Being*, 149.

Victorians. So that we had two quarrels to wage; two fights to fight; one with them individually; and one with them socially. We were living say in 1910; they were living in 1860. (*MOB*, 147, brackets mine)

This was made all the more vivid by the unusual gaps in age that in Woolf's instance exposed gaps in time, a present and a future extraordinarily quickened and intensified by the temporal and familial divisions. This personal dichotomy parallels the cultural and social dichotomy for Woolf, the looking glass she holds up to her own nature and British society's.

Never did Woolf personally come to understand and know that distinction between Victorian conversation versus open dialogue or argument more explicitly and disturbingly than when George Duckworth took her to dinner at the Dowager Countess of Carnarvon's house. While the passage in Woolf's piece for the Memoir Club is infamous for the final scene of molestation and comical in its retelling for the memoir club, the actual dinner scene reminds us why Woolf's relation to Greek is exceedingly personal, complex, and complicated:

The conversation was mild and kindly. Indeed I soon felt that I could not only reply to their questions...but could initiate remarks of my own. Heaven knows what devil prompted me—or why to Lady Carnarvon and Mrs Popham of Littlecote of all people in the world I, a chit of eighteen, should have chosen to discourse upon the need of expressing the emotions! That, I said, was the great lack of modern life. The ancients, I said, discussed everything in common. Had Lady Carnarvon ever read the dialogues of Plato? “We—both men and women—“ once launched it was difficult to stop, nor was I sure that my audacity was not holding them spell-bound with admiration. I felt that I was earning George's gratitude for ever. Suddenly a twitch, a shiver, a convulsion of amazing expressiveness, shook the Countess by my side; her diamonds, of which she wore a

chaste selection, flashed in my eyes; and stopping, I saw George Duckworth blushing crimson on the other side of the table. I realized that I had committed some unspeakable impropriety...and directly dinner was over George, pretending to help me on with my cloak, whispered in my ear in a voice of agony, "They're not used to young women saying anything—" (*Moments of Being*, 174)

If Greek was Woolf's model of open dialogue, particularly between a man and a woman, the grand old Victorian ladies did not concur, and therefore neither did her step-brother. The "seven unhappy years"³⁵⁵ between the loss of her stepsister Stella in 1897 and the death of her father in 1904, and that include these outings and private intrusions right through the thick of Woolf's adolescence and sexual maturity into a young woman, are irrevocably associated with her study of Greek. Before George Duckworth crept in and flung himself on Virginia Stephen's bed, Woolf was falling asleep to the thought of opening up her Greek dictionary the next morning to "go on spelling out the dialogues of Plato with Miss Case..."³⁵⁶ Woolf indeed claims that while she was recovering from her second psychotic break, "the illness that was not unnaturally the result of all these emotions and complications," she was "convinced the birds were singing Greek choruses and that King Edward was using the foulest language possible among Ozzie Dickinson's azaleas." The foul language of patriarchy is indeed the King's English, but the Greek language, inaccessible to women precisely because the course of study at Oxbridge was unavailable to Woolf, has acquired its own psychological connotations and associations in Woolf accessing the forbidding texts. While we will never know the degree or severity of exactly what transpired between George Duckworth and Virginia Stephen, in enduring George Duckworth,

³⁵⁵ What Woolf repeatedly calls them in her memoir "A Sketch of the Past."

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 177

Virginia Woolf came to know that sex, gender, and Victorian patriarchal authority are imbricated in language. To discuss the open exchange of ideas between men and women evidenced in Plato's dialogues, to showcase one's learning and acquisition of Greek, was to be unnaturally silenced. In Victorian conversation, George knows, young women are not supposed to actually say anything. By the time Virginia Stephen recovered, her sister had set up house for both of them in Bloomsbury.

No wonder that when Thoby, Vanessa, and Virginia first gathered both men and women for a new kind of dinner party at Gordon Square, the ones they deemed the "Thursday Evening Society" that were modeled upon the Cambridge Apostle "Conversazione Society" the majority of the young Bloomsbury men enjoyed as undergraduates,³⁵⁷ the difference came not only as a revelation but a revolution to Woolf. At first she would attempt the Victorian manner and more—"None of our old conversational openings seemed to do.The conversation languished in a way that would have been impossible in the drawing room at Hyde Park Gate. Yet the silence was difficult, not dull. It seemed as if the standard of what was worth saying had risen so that it was better not to break it unworthily."³⁵⁸ Only when Vanessa "incautiously" uses the word "beauty" to describe a picture show did the silence transform Hyde Park conversation into Gordon Square dialogue. At that, one of the young men would lift his head slowly and say, 'It depends upon what you mean by beauty.'It was as if the bull had at last been turned into the ring. The bull might be 'beauty,' might be 'good,' might be 'reality'. Whatever it was, it was some abstract question that now drew out all our forces.The argument, whether it was about atmosphere or the nature of truth, was always tossed into the middle of the party.It had been proved that beauty was—or beauty was not—for I have never been quite sure which—part of a

³⁵⁷ See Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again*. Seven of the ten men he associated with early Bloomsbury were indeed Apostles, and all of them took the classics tripos.

picture.”³⁵⁹ In such a manner did conversation transform into dialogue in a year for Vanessa and Virginia Stephen, and the value of the Cambridge education is revealed to Woolf in a positively transcendent light, one that could allow Woolf to transform conversation into well-considered concepts and ideas as a burgeoning essayist and writer of fiction. “From such discussions Vanessa and I got probably much the same pleasure that undergraduates get,” Woolf continues, and even more revelatory is that these young Cambridge men “criticized our arguments as severely as their own....All that tremendous encumbrance of appearance and behavior which George had piled upon our first years vanished completely.”³⁶⁰ By taking their arguments and points seriously, as seriously as their own, Woolf has her first glimpse at what it could be to be treated as an intellectual equal among men.

We can only imagine what, at this early phase of Woolf’s fiction writing, would have become of the incomplete story fragment entitled “A Dialogue on a Hill” written within the same two year span as the very first recorded stories from 1906-1908. It not only begins by Woolf describing the Cornish moors and hills of her beloved Cornwall as surpassing those imagined by Homer’s “Lotus Isles.” Woolf’s envisioned dialogue has us imagining two English travelers, a man and a woman—befittingly named Charmides and Eugenia given the Greek, Platonic subtext,—setting out to climb one of the loftiest moors in the region. Woolf goes on, “...and the fact that the last named was a woman, gave its flavour of course to the dialogue; for it is surprising how much difference there is, even in this age, between a man’s view of the world and a woman’s view.”³⁶¹ Woolf makes clear that their interest in each other is “Platonic” rather than in the colloquial sense of its usage, which allows them to talk freely but also to highlight the

³⁵⁸ *MOB*, 189.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 190.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 191.

³⁶¹ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 326

difference, "...even in this age, between a man's view of the world and a woman's view."³⁶²

Perhaps most significantly, Woolf makes a point of indicating they are possessed of an "equal, and sufficiently high level of intelligence."³⁶³ This is the ideal Woolf was groping towards in her fiction, an imagined English countryside reminiscent of the reimagined Greek islands where women taught Socrates or argued freely, without fear of censure or impropriety.

Conversation, then, and the model of the Greeks, particularly Plato's dialogues, is more than conversation in the early writings of Woolf. When Woolf inveighs against the "materialists" like Galsworthy, Bennett, or Wells by the time she was writing *Jacob's Room*, she explicitly shifts the whole notion of "solidity" from a "well-constructed and solid" novel, the mode of realist fiction, to the Platonic manner and Socratic mode of speech, a dialogue and engagement of character and consciousness, and ultimately even a pattern and form of novel-writing that, at least in shape, "hardens and intensifies into truth."³⁶⁴ Woolf conspicuously has Rosamond reading Walter Pater's *Greek Studies* the one moment in the morning she has free in the schoolroom before the men coming home to lunch intrude upon her serenity. She is just as soon conspicuously interrupted, her Greek studies unavailable even as a dalliance or pastime. The shape of a Platonic dialogue informs the conversation also unavailable to Phyllis but nonetheless observed by her in "Phyllis and Rosamond." That ardent conversation, not schoolboys debating but a man and a woman engaged in dialogue that is at once abstract and frank, full of theories yet candid and practical enough concerning matrimony to be "startling" to Phyllis, is described by Woolf's narrator as something that would crack and strip all the trappings of Victorian convention found in the Hibbert parlor. There, it would not be allowed.

³⁶² Susan Dick notes the probable model for her Charmides here is Clive Bell, who'd recently married Vanessa. They'd all traveled together in April of 1908 to St. Ives in Cornwall, where Clive and Virginia took long walks together on the Cornish hills. See Dick's notes to *Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 339.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Common Reader*, "On Not Knowing Greek."

Here, “Love...was a robust, ingenuous thing which stood out in the daylight, *naked and solid*, to be tapped and scrutinized as you thought best.”³⁶⁵ This was the Greek ideal reincarnated as Modern dialogue.

This is also why Woolf’s interlocutors in “A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus” both eschew Victorian ornamentation, sentiment and vestiges that “obscured the outline and destroyed the substance” in favor of “a Greek shape.”³⁶⁶ The setting is meant to suggest what Woolf would later describe as the Greeks inhabiting that “fastness all their own.” When the monk interrupts the dialogue and evokes from the Englishmen a reverie that “was lit by another power which survives trees and even plants them,” we are reading the kind of Platonic shape or pattern Woolf is making from the moment even in one of her earliest pieces of fiction that has survived. It returns similarly in the form that Woolf describes in “Modern Fiction” when she battles against a misplaced labor that obscures or blots out the “light of the conception,” her luminous halo to be traced by the author. That Greek relation to their language, the Greek character itself as manifested in their writings, is one that will “lead us from youth to age, groping through our island fogs and barbarities towards that unattainable perfection.... We hear the voice of men whose outlook on life was perfectly direct and unclouded.”³⁶⁷ Always in these early pieces, one feels the Greek ideal set against how it played out not only in Woolf’s life but in the lives of her earliest characters and characterizations.

*** 5.4: GREEK SOLIDS—MATTHEW ARNOLD AND THE MASCULINE LINEAGE IN WOOLF**

³⁶⁵ Ibid, 25-26., emphasis mine.

³⁶⁶ *CSF*, 66-67.

³⁶⁷ “The Perfect Language” first published by Woolf in *The Times Literary Supplement*, May 24, 1917, reprinted here in *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Works*, ebook.

Pitting these two early short stories of 1906 against each other from this earliest formative phase of Woolf's fictional writing and narrative exploration also exposes a faultline between the masculine and feminine "inheritances" of Greek that Woolf's fiction willfully negotiates and, as it came to the male inheritance, often transgresses. Imbedded in these two early stories is how the Greek ideal erected by Victorian sages is then undermined by the tangled bank of Darwinian influence, including the late 19th century emergence of historical and anthropological study influenced by natural history that brought *prehistory* back to the edifice of a fully formed 5th century B.C. Greek ideal; there was more to the archeological ruins and classical texts than just the solidifying vision of Greece provided by certain imminent Victorians. If the present that Woolf stood upon in 1906 included the sway of the young Cambridge Apostles, especially the manners and mores of George Moore and his philosophy, there was also the Victorian scholarship that preceded it. And with this male lineage of a Greek inheritance in Woolf, there was also a female lineage—one that in some fashion can be traced back not just to the great Greek heroines like Antigone or the poet Sappho or Socrates' tutor Aspasia, but more heroically to the scholarship and model of Newnham College anthropologist Jane Ellen Harrison. 1903 saw the publication of Moore's *Principia Ethica*, but it also included Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, which revolutionized ways of seeing Greek antiquity beyond the patriarchal deification of Greek culture embodied on Mt. Olympus. The Greek gods and goddesses, as well as the Grecians who worshipped them, also had origin and descent with modifications. Moore and Harrison present two opposing figures of the Greek influence as it was present to Woolf at the turn of the century, but behind them is the scholarship and lineage of Victorian heritage—as Frank Turner succinctly puts it, there was not a "Greek tyranny over Victorians, but Victorian tyranny over Greece."³⁶⁸ From Matthew Arnold to Walter

³⁶⁸ *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, p. 8.

Pater to so many other mid and late Victorian luminaries, this sphere of influence impacted Greek studies for Woolf, in no small part because their circles intersected with Leslie Stephen and all things Cambridge. There was this other aspect of Virginia Woolf's Victorian childhood through which she had to filter her own study and signification of Greece.

When "Phyllis and Rosamond"'s titular characters fictionally reoccupy the past of Virginia Stephen and her own sister Vanessa, the quintessential Victorian household as they experienced it; and then when the two unnamed interlocutors in "A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus," clearly based upon Thoby and Adrian Stephen, ascend the mountain that made Periclean Athens marmoreal and envision it as their cultural moment—what did these two very different gendered perspectives on a Greek inheritance mean to the author who penned them both? Just what is it that Virginia Stephen, the student of Greek, creates out of not just the male and female experience, but the male and female lineage of her Greek studies? Critic Theodore Koulouris attempts to negotiate the complexity, even the contradictory aspects of Woolf's personal, social, and cultural kinships to her own Hellenism:

What the reader should keep in mind is that Woolf's 'Greekness', awkwardly and sometimes painfully *vacillating* between the predominantly philological approach of the 'male' line of British Hellenism *and* the newly-institutionalized 'female' scholarship in Greek, is emblematic of her own *solitary* study in the field and, more importantly, of her unease as a 'female amateur' in the socio-cultural co-ordinates of Hellenism.³⁶⁹

What "Such were the Greeks!"³⁷⁰ means to the Virginia Stephen just emerging as an author has behind it, as a referent, what an entire English acquisition of Grecian antiquity meant to a Victorian culture transitioning to a Modern era Woolf actively engages and participates in, one

³⁶⁹ *Hellenism and Loss in the Work of Virginia Woolf*, p. 8. Emphasis his.

³⁷⁰ "Dialogue upon Mt. Pentelicus," *Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 64

that Woolf registers differently not just for different characters but for herself writing at different phases of her career. The Greek ideal in Woolf has many manifestations, and they do not always cohere, not even for the student of Woolf.

What Koulouris' exploration of Woolf's "Greekness" bridges is also the critical studies of Woolf that are unavailable to ambiguity in utilizing Greek as a locus or logos of influence, whereby the Bloomsbury male homosocial and homosexual peers of Woolf must become a boon or a bogey to Woolf's development as a writer. Or whereby the "female line" alluded to by Koulouris, specifically the prominent figure of Jane Ellen Harrison, becomes Woolf's only positive acquisition of Greek and Greek literature. That the formative years of Woolf studying Greek also become significant in the losses she endures and the abuse she experiences create even more difficulties in sorting out a "homogenous force of influence."³⁷¹ Deciphering these two lineages of her Greekness, with a different emphasis than Koulouris for the purpose of delineating the solid and shifting influences of Woolf that includes the naturalist perspective, provides its own perspective. How this plays out in Woolf's absorption of it and ultimately her application of it in her fiction creates its own dynamic between the solid and shifting polarities within the very question of "Greek" permeating the educated class of the British Empire.

Indeed, the "male line" of British Hellenism has its own ambiguities, dichotomies, and vacillations that form their own debates and differences within the 'Oxbridge' educated Britain from Victoria's England up to Virginia's, and what ideal Woolf *does* make of Plato and Greek literature more generally, regardless of the other significations and allusions Greek literature holds within the storehouse of Woolf's canon, has this multifaceted cultural history behind it. Woolf will title her most famous and explicit essay on Greek antiquity "On Not Knowing Greek," a position of the "common reader" that Woolf herself utilizes to disarm the host of

Greek scholars and enthusiasts who've asserted that they do know and own Greek: "For it is vain and foolish to talk of knowing Greek, since in our ignorance we should be at the bottom of any class of schoolboys, since we do not know how the words sounded, or where precisely we ought to laugh, or how the actors acted, and between this foreign people and ourselves there is not only difference of race and tongue but a tremendous breach of tradition."³⁷² The tradition, though—the male line that the line "Such were the Greeks!" is meant to parody in "Pentelicus"—compels its Oxbridge alumni to feel as if they have bridged that chasm of time.

The work that wielded the greatest influence and most emulated cultural adaptation of the Greek ideal in England belonged to Matthew Arnold, whose *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) became *the* text that made iconic this notion of Greek perfection for several generations of writers to come, Woolf included.³⁷³ His is the most predominant example of the male philological line of Victorian Hellenism. Simply juxtaposing its history and argument alongside Woolf's allusions to Greece in "Pentelicus," not to mention her essays "The Perfect Language" and "On Not Knowing Greek," remind the reader just how closely connected Woolf was to so many seminal figures of Victorian classical scholarship. *Culture and Anarchy* was first published serially between 1867-1868 in *Cornhill Magazine*, the same magazine first edited by William Makepeace Thackeray and taken over by his son-in-law Leslie Stephen in 1871.³⁷⁴ Woolf's father indeed swam in the same academic, familial circles with Arnold. When Woolf's Cambridge men call the Greek escorts "barbarians" in "Pentelicus," it is indeed not simply Plato's usage but Matthew Arnold's famous use of the term, along with the term "Philistines" to describe the upper and middle classes of England, respectively, to which the young Englishmen

³⁷¹ Koulouris, 8.

³⁷² *Common Reader*, 1st lines of essay.

³⁷³ For the most comprehensive assessment of Arnold's sway, see Frank Turner's chapter "Victorian Humanistic Hellenism" in *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1981, especially pages 15-36.

³⁷⁴ Woolf's essays, letters, autobiography, and fiction are riddled with references and allusions to Matthew Arnold.

make reference.³⁷⁵ Even at the turn of the century, *Culture and Anarchy* had become anthologized and taken as the definitive statement on Hellenism as it related to Victorian culture. “Arnold’s exposition of the character of Hellenism...,” writes Frank Turner, “set the tone for discussions of Greek virtues for the next fifty years. Although humanistic appreciation for Greece did not begin with Arnold’s essay, many late-Victorian readers within and without the scholarly community were attracted to Greek civilization because of its alleged embodiment of the values that Arnold had championed.”³⁷⁶ While the Victorian scholarship on Greek religion, culture, and literature was quite varied, it is Arnold’s vision of a smooth, polished Greek perfection that became the definitive voice, the one you can hear behind the Apostolic ardor as well as Woolf’s own essays and sentiments that not only suggest but state that the “stable, the permanent, the original human being is to be found there” in Greek antiquity.³⁷⁷

Pitted against Hebraism as one of the two great civilizing impulses in Western culture, the former providing “right acting” with the latter providing “right thinking,” Matthew Arnold averred that the English had suffered more than just about any culture from a dearth of Hellenistic “ease, clearness, and radiancy”—Arnold’s most famous summative phrase for it Grecian “sweetness and light.”³⁷⁸ With a nod to Hegelian historical process, Arnold posited that Hebraism (under Christianity) had taken hold of European cultures by the fourth century A.D., but whereas Hellenism had returned to the forefront with the Renaissance in Italy and most of Europe, that foothold in England had been usurped by Puritanical fervor and the Protestant Reformation. Hebraism and its attendant zealous nature of moral reform and action had owned England and its ruling classes. Between the two “rival” forces, “dividing the empire of the world

³⁷⁵ Never mind that the Greek peasants would not belong, if transplanted, to the English upper class! The terms “Philistinism” and “Barbarism” became synonymous with anything pitted against high culture, and Woolf is poking fun at the English tourists’ misprisions of multiple texts and references along the way.

³⁷⁶ *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, p. 18

³⁷⁷ “On Not Knowing Greek,” ebook.

between them,” there is never equilibrium, and what England above all needs in Arnold’s 1869 is the aiming towards perfection that Hellenism offers:

But the true grace and serenity is that of which Greece and Greek art suggest the admirable ideals of perfection,—a serenity which comes from having made order among ideas and harmonized them; whereas the serenity of aristocracies, at least the peculiar serenity of aristocracies of Teutonic origin, appears to come from their never having had any ideas to trouble them.³⁷⁹

Arnold makes light of the English aristocracy to the degree that he wonders whether “upon the whole earth there is anything so unintelligent, so unapt to perceive how the world is really going, as an ordinary young Englishman of our upper class.”³⁸⁰ What might save these brows unfurrowed by thought, as well as the rest of England, are the times themselves with the British Empire on the move—“and the essence of an epoch of expansion is a movement of ideas, and the one salvation of an epoch of expansion is a harmony of ideas. The very principle of the authority which we are seeking as a defense against anarchy is right reason, ideas, light.”³⁸¹ That is, the idealized light of 5th century Periclean Greece. Arnold’s synthesizing refinement that removed virtually all turbulence and conflict from ancient Greek history, provided the Greek “An unclouded clearness of mind, an unimpeded play of thought,” and will find the same atmosphere and temperament in Woolf’s thinking on Greek culture and literature. It stands in contrast to the clouded English countryside in all its correspondent vagueness and confusion.³⁸²

Never mind that Arnold’s Hebrews are in actuality his designated contemporaries and intellectual foils—English “Protestant Nonconformists” and other threats to culture that represent

³⁷⁸ *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, 1869, 1st Ed. Public Domain Book, ebook, 66ff

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 144, 71

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

overzealous individualism, commercialism, philosophies of subjectivity and mechanism, and other cultural signposts of anarchist tendencies and a disdain for authority—or that his notion of Hellenism derives not just from a broad reading of the classics as both an Oxford undergraduate and professor but more profoundly from the late eighteenth German critics of Hellene aesthetics and history.³⁸³ Arnold had fully internalized, for his own purposes, Coleridge’s famous delineation between the debased commercialism of industrialized Britain and “old England, the spiritual, Platonic old England.”³⁸⁴ What couldn’t be clearer to Arnold is the need for a Platonic return to England.

When Woolf also parodies the young Englishmen at Pentelicus claiming their Greek heritage, even speaking to the monk as “a Greek to a Greek,” behind this, too, is the emergent ethnological beliefs in racial “stocks” that Arnold alludes to in the “Hebraism and Hellenism” chapter of *Culture and Anarchy*. “Science has now made visible to everybody the great and pregnant elements of difference which lie in race,” Arnold writes,

and in how signal a manner they make the genius and history of an Indo-European people vary from those of a Semitic people. Hellenism is of Indo-European growth, Hebraism is of Semitic growth, and we English, a nation of Indo-European stock, seem to belong naturally to the movement of Hellenism.³⁸⁵

Matthew Arnold paired this belief with a Viconian-influenced cycle of history, borrowed from his father Thomas Arnold, that saw parallels of national development and progress at their apex with 5th century B.C. Greece and 19th century England respectively. Matthew Arnold’s famous and multiform assertions that sought a bulwark against the onslaught of the new, not just poetically against a receding “sea of faith” but against the flux of modernity, crucially juxtaposes the end of the 5th century of Greece with the present mid-century in England. In both eras and nations when there were signals of the *end* of the era, Arnold famously claims in his “Preface” of

³⁸² Behind this thought for both Arnold and Woolf is Wincklemann’s “Solar Theory” of Greek radiance and light.

³⁸³ Indeed, many of the notions of Hellenism found in *Culture & Anarchy* first made their appearance in his essay “Heinrich Heine.”

1853, “the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.”³⁸⁶ It is also why his father could write that “The period to which the work of Thucydides refers belongs properly to modern and not ancient history,” why, as Frank Turner summarizes it, “Thomas Arnold went so far as to claim that two civilizations standing thousands of years apart in time might have far more in common than ones separated by a few centuries.”³⁸⁷ Matthew Arnold’s Athens of Pericles, noticeably without the more skeptical vision of Euripides and other nonconformists, could edify an England of Victoria because both cultures stood atop the precipice of progress, and the more perfected vision of Greece could provide that needed “agent of intellectual deliverance,”³⁸⁸ thereby passing the torch of sweet enlightenment to dear old England before it teetered over into anarchy.

That Arnold refined out of existence any impediments to the Greek ideal so that it could shine brightly for England did not escape Virginia Woolf, but neither did it prevent her from waxing poetic about the Greeks in the same vein. This Arnoldian line of thinking, the most predominant of the male Victorian lineage, remained steadfast in Woolf and informs her own reading of the Greeks. Woolf, too, idealized Greek literature and philosophy as much as any Victorian or Oxbridge graduate. To read passages from her 1917 essay “The Perfect Language”—Greek, of course—is to hear the Victorian echoes of Arnold:

³⁸⁴ Again, see Turner’s close reading of Arnold in *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, here specifically pages 18-22.

³⁸⁵ *Culture and Anarchy*, 163.

³⁸⁶ Matthew Arnold, *On the Classical Tradition*, p. 1.

³⁸⁷ Thomas Arnold’s “Introduction” to *History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides*, 3; xiv., qtd. in Turner’s *Greek Heritage*, p. 27.

³⁸⁸ from Arnold’s inaugural lecture as professor of poetry at Oxford, “The Modern Element in Poetry.” *On the Classical Tradition*, p. 20.

Here we have the peculiar magic, the lure that will lead us from youth to age, groping through our island fogs and barbarities towards that unattainable perfection. . . . It scarcely seems the right word for that extremely individual and definite spirit which is the flame of the Greek character. . . . These lines, in the first place, seem to be written neither in the infancy nor in the old age of the world, but in its maturity. There is no prettiness as there is no mysticism in them. We hear the voice of men whose outlook on life was perfectly direct and unclouded. . . . One is inclined to think of their literature, too, as a succession of complete and perfect utterances. . . . Greek literature is not so much literature as the type of literature, the supreme example of what can be done with words.³⁸⁹

Arnold could not have written his sentiments better himself, or the Apostolic crowd who read him, too, for that matter. When Woolf concludes her more famous essay “On Not Knowing Greek” from the *Common Reader* (1925) with the plangent lines “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,” she has fully digested Arnold’s delineation between the Christian Hebraism of England and the needed relief and deliverance back to the supreme example of Hellenism. No wonder, in a short review of the Victorian critic’s unpublished letters, Woolf begins, “Even in these few letters Matthew Arnold stands out like a bust of the best Greek period, restrained, dear cut, aristocratic.”³⁹⁰

Still, the strength of Woolf’s own idealization of Greek, even waxing panegyric with Plato at times, does not render her oblivious to the appropriation and acquisition of Greek as a male measuring stick. When Greek language became English possession, Woolf exposed the

³⁸⁹ *Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. II, Virginia Woolf: The Complete Collection*, ebook.

differences. She satirized, countermanded, and grew to oppose the social and cultural acquisition of Hellenism for empire, war, and country. This is also why juxtaposing Arnold alongside “A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus” renders the story not only satire but nearly pitch-perfect parody of Arnold’s Victorian Hellenism as it had been appropriated by Woolf’s male counterparts. There they are, the six public school educated men, claiming themselves the heirs of Periclean Greece by their references and allusions, marching astride their statuesque equestrian donkeys and deeming all others barbarians in the solid belief that “Englishmen are Greeks.” Plato is present, affirming their Greek ideal and alluded to four times as a dialogue is attempted on the famous slopes of the mountain, and like Plato, at a significant juncture a myth or a narrative that verges on poetry arises in the telling. But what cuts most deeply into Arnold’s cultural argument is the final presence of the monk. It isn’t simply the Platonic ideal and the mythological reverie the six Englishmen make out of the monk, but the fact that the monk is, well, a *monk*. The whole final sequence lightly satirizes Arnold’s rivaling cultural attachments. Arnold’s lectures to his countrymen on the Hebraic and Hellenistic find unlikely synthesis and cohesion in this figure of the monk simply fulfilling his responsibilities for the monastery nearby.³⁹¹ Here is your consolation of Christianity, and although “brown” in complexion rather than the white of marble, he has the brow and physique that could have stood for the famous Greek sculptor who cut and chiseled the human form divine from the stones of Pentelicus. This hapless Christian meets a Greek fate in the eyes of his beholders, a satirical yet unifying symbol of Arnold’s iconography. The way the Englishmen see him has everything to do with how they were taught to see in the 19th century.

³⁹⁰ from Woolf’s review of “Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold,” first appearing in *Nation & Athenaeum*, Feb. 16, 1924. *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Works*, ebook.

* 5.5: STATUES OF STATUTES FROM LORD ELGIN TO THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

What makes the satire all the more comprehensive is how “Pentelicus” and its marble make their way into Woolf sharing and ultimately shattering the Victorian Hellenistic ideal as it manifested itself through sculpture as culture, Grecian statues as English statutes and status. Rather than the dialogue in Athens or another inhabited Grecian city where Plato would have presided, the mountain itself provides origins, and the Englishmen must “stumble painfully among the crude blocks of marble....It was salutary, because in Greece it is possible to forget that statues are made of marble, and it is wholesome to see that marble opposes itself, solid and sharp and perverse to the sculptor’s chisel.”³⁹² Each Englishman at this point imagines himself Phidias or at the least Praxiteles, and you “would have supposed that each speaker had some personal conquest to celebrate and was the generous victor of the stone himself. He had forced it to yield its Heres or its Apollo once with his own hand.”³⁹³

Behind this imagined possession of Greek mastery by the Englishmen is indeed the English possession of Greek masterpieces. Woolf reminds us that the mountain “bears on her side the noble scar” suffered at the hands of Phidias and his stonemasons, and then has each Englishman imagining and virtually believing they'd sculpted masterpieces themselves. That same marble that went into the edifice of the Parthenon is of course the Elgin Marbles housed in England since Lord Elgin’s acquisition of them and placement in London’s British Museum. While it is not necessary (or possible) to discover all that the possessed marble meant in terms of influence upon English aesthetics and culture in the 19th century, the reappropriation of Pentelicus marble by Woolf’s travelers resonates with the impact back home.

³⁹¹ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 67-68

³⁹² *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 63.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

Part of this allusion to sculpture is buried in passing reference when the travel group falls short of correctly quoting Thomas Love Peacock in the attempt to deride English philistinism. Peacock's *Crotchet Castle* (1831), as S.P. Rosenbaum convincingly argues, is a major influence on the tone, content, and style of Woolf's own narrated dialogue.³⁹⁴ Largely bypassing the topical issues of Greek independence and politics, the major point of discussion comes to rest on "what it was that the Greeks had been, and what it is that they are no longer."³⁹⁵ This is not to say that the Cambridge companions don't also allude to their disdain for their own common English sect and how far they fall short of the classical Greek measuring stick, schooled as these young men are on both Matthew Arnold's brand of Hellenism as well as Peacock's satire of the Victorian intellectual debate over Hellenism. One of the funniest passages in "Pentelicus" has Woolf's most vocal polemicist attempting to quote Peacock's famous lines from *Crotchet's Castle* but unable to do so. Asking for his travel copy of Peacock to recall the line, he remembers it "had been left with certain socks and a tin of tobacco, the bitterest loss of all, in the ruins of Olympia."³⁹⁶ There's the greater lament of the lost tobacco over Peacock's lost novel, and so the exact quotation and the haze of a good smoke, if not the clarity of the past, are lost to the travelers as well.

Woolf's interlocutor only manages to pull out Peacock's first line as a referent to his idealization of classical Greece, but the content of those lost lines carry a larger subtext for Woolf than the speaker can speak or see. Woolf's tourist turns nostalgic:

such a people were as sudden as the dawn, and died as the day dies here in Greece, completely. Ignorant of all that should be ignored—of charity, religion, domestic life, learning, and science—they fixed their minds upon the beautiful and the good, and found

³⁹⁴ "Virginia Woolf: 'A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus,'" *TLS*, Sept. 11-17, 1987, 979.

them sufficient not for this world only but for an infinite number of worlds to come.

“Where the Greeks had modesty—” but to finish the quotation, for he must read what none now could speak.... (65)

The lost lines come from Mr. Crochet himself in Peacock’s novel, worth quoting at length to land Woolf’s point:

Mr. Crotchet— “But where the Greeks had modesty, we have cant; where they had poetry, we have cant; where they had patriotism, we have cant; where they had any thing that exalts, delights, or adorns humanity, we have nothing but cant, cant, cant. And, sir, to show my contempt for cant in all its shapes, I have adorned my house with the Greek Venus, in all her shapes, and am ready to fight her battle against all the societies that ever were instituted for the suppression of truth and beauty.”³⁹⁷

Mr. Crotchet’s argument is with the good Reverend Doctor Folliot, who cannot stomach a room full of nude sculptures, much less discussion of English maidens turned wives that should even consider posing nude (or being nude). The modest example and meaning the Rev. Dr. Folliot espouses to counter Greek nudity is the ideal 19th century woman, one Woolf would later describe as the Victorian “angel of the household” who in Peacock “stays home and looks after her husband’s dinner.”³⁹⁸ Mr. Crotchet indeed had filled his house with every nude sculpture of Venus his money could buy in defiance of a recent edict from London that “no plaster of paris Venus should appear in the streets without petticoats.”³⁹⁹ That the selfsame Venuses that Mr.

³⁹⁵ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 65.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock; Including his Novels, Poems, Fugitive Pieces, Criticisms, etc.* Vol. II, ed. by Henry Cole, London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1875, Google eBook, p. 125.

³⁹⁸ *from the Crotchet’s Castle* chapter “The Sleeping Venus,” p. 126.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 122.

Crotchet points out were realized from “the finest imaginings of Plato” cause in the Rev./Dr. a conundrum—“disposed as he was, that whatever had been in Greece was right,” the English worship of all things classically Greek comes into direct conflict with English modesty and propriety and a woman’s place in society, something Rev. Dr. Folliott finally is able to qualify by remembering the more limited and rightful place of Plato in the pantheon of Greek study and worship at the English universities: “I am aware, sir, that Plato, in his *Symposium*, discourseth very eloquently touching the Uranian and Pandemian Venus; but you must remember that, in our Universities, Plato is held to be little better than a misleader of youth; and they have shown their contempt for him, not only by never reading him...but even by never printing a complete edition of him.”⁴⁰⁰ To only the limited number of English personages who had read Plato’s *Symposium* would Folliott show these nude statues, whereas Crotchet would show all to learn a radically new (because radically old and Greek) modesty. The debate concludes magnificently with Mr. Crotchet saying hypothetically he would allow “Miss Crotchet to sit for a model to Canova,” a sentiment that so overcomes the Reverend Doctor’s sense of propriety that he physically “overbalanced his chair, and laid himself on the carpet in a right angle, of which his back was the base.”⁴⁰¹ That the good Reverend Doctor’s moral rectitude and backside come to model a Pythagorean geometry all its own provides one of the richest, most hilarious scenes in all of Peacock.

So it is that Woolf, via Peacock and Arnold, counters a perceived moral philistinism with an idealized philhellenism, but, in both Peacock’s chapter and Woolf’s allusion to it through her Englishman in Greece, the satire cuts both ways. Mr. Crochet has read just enough of the Greeks, furnished in his library by the good Reverend Doctor himself, to be dangerous. Just so, Woolf’s

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁰¹ 127.

young man begins to quote Peacock and can't, but it doesn't prevent him from then creating out of his oratory a Platonic form of the ideal human generalized to all Greeks of Greek antiquity. As they allude to the statuary cut from the mountain's marble two millennia previously, part of the distance measured in the descent of Pentelicus, from the Greek to the English, is indeed what is lost in time. Woolf's first speaker, her Adrian Stephen character, recapitulates Mr. Crotchet's argument when he postulates that the Greeks, "by paring down the superfluous had revealed at last the perfect statue, or the sufficient stanza, just as we obversely by cloaking them in our rags of sentiment and imagination had obscured the outline and destroyed the substance," a point he argues to the ultimate conclusion—that there isn't any room left "for any later form of beauty to creep in," that "nothing is left for us but to worship in silence" their accomplishments. To this the Thoby figure, already guilty of a heresy, Woolf's narrator says, by voting as a masters graduate to remove the compulsory study of Greek at Cambridge— ("that Greek should cease as he put it, 'to whip stupid boys into good behaviour'")⁴⁰²—reminds his companion that, not only did he only "take a third in [his] tripos," but that he was speaking as a "sentimentalist" who makes of the Greeks "all that is best in yourself" and "which can mean in short all that we do not know and as in your case all that we dream and desire."⁴⁰³ Rather, this second interlocutor avers that in the "words of Milton" and other English writers can still be found a beauty that measures up to the Greek ideal. The Thoby character might not take the Greek idealization as far as his brother in theory, but he comes off as even more arrogant and condescending; the gist of his argument actually aligns Plato and Sophocles with himself—"So, while you read your Greek on the slopes of Pentelicus, you deny that her children exist any longer. But for us scholars⁴⁰⁴ —"

Their debate rests not upon how ideal and superior the Greeks of antiquity remain, but upon

⁴⁰² Thoby Stephen had indeed recently voted to do so.

whether or not the Englishmen have access to it in their own superiority over the barbarity of contemporary Greece—and the rest of England and Europe, for that matter.

And this is Woolf's engendered difference as, quite consciously, a female Hellenist. It is conspicuous that the Virginia Stephen who made that same trek up Pentelicus with her brothers and sisters and Violet Dickinson in the fall of 1906 does not include a female interlocutor or presence in the story save, perhaps, the narrator herself. Instead, to provide the female experience of Greek statuary and the male English inheritance and appropriation of it, the stone edifices, like Elgin's Marbles, come to England. Again, Peacock gives us a context: In the same chapter of *Crotchet's Castle*, "The Sleeping Venus," Mr. Crotchet fully lays out his preference for the Athenian women of antiquity "who would not have made any scruple about sitting as models to Praxiteles," that his woman should be modeled after Aspasia or Lais rather than the Good Reverend's insipid examples of the Athenian virgins (I.e., English maids) who grew up into wives who stayed at home. "Well, sir, the Greeks," Crotchet continues:

why do we call the Elgin marbles inestimable? Simply because they are true to nature. And why are they so superior in that point to all modern works, with all our greater knowledge of anatomy? Why, sir, but because the Greeks, having no cant, had better opportunities of studying models.⁴⁰⁵

Crotchet additionally references contemporary modest women in Italy, a countess no less, who would sit for Canova, disrobing all arguments for Victorian-style modesty and the controversy then surrounding nudity in stone. As Crotchet argues that his Venuses are the very model of the

⁴⁰³ *Shorter Fiction*, 66. The "tripos" of course refers to the undergraduate Classical Tripos at Cambridge, upon which Adrian had only earned a 3rd, his Greek knowledge and translation skills not measuring up to the exemplary 1st or more accomplished 2nd.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁰⁵ *Works of Peacock*, 126-27.

natural, his guffawing foil responds, “It is too natural: too natural, sir.”⁴⁰⁶ A century later, Woolf’s Englishmen are still debating Victorian modesty and Victorian cant.

There was more at stake than whether or not the Greek ideal of beauty was natural or not. With the Elgin Marbles then on display in the British Museum, the whole question of modesty and the Greek ideal as represented by Phidian sculpture arrived home with cannons and fanfare. In June of 1822, the Statue of Achilles was erected, part of the Wellington Monument in Hyde Park, becoming London’s first display of a public nude sculpture since antiquity. Pericles had commissioned the building of the Parthenon to pay homage to Athena in delivering Athen’s victory over the Persians; so, too, would the English honor General Wellesley’s victory over Napoleon by commissioning Richard Westmacott to sculpt the Statue of Achilles out of the French cannons melted down after recent victories in the Napoleonic Wars.⁴⁰⁷ This, the same Westmacott who studied under Italian artist Antonio Canova alluded to by Peacock, and whose father “had testified in favor of purchasing the Elgin Marbles on the grounds of their affinity with natural beauty.”⁴⁰⁸ That Westmacott added a caressing fig leaf over the loins of Achilles did not truncate or diminish the controversy, the dispute all the more ironic since the funds for the statue had been collected by a league of English women. This, indeed, is the neoclassical controversy Peacock’s chapter alludes to, as Crotchet furnishes his house with nude Venuses after reading in the papers about the newest edicts regarding resolutions to the nude statutes that “no plaster-of-Paris Venus should appear in the streets without petticoats.” (The paper Crotchet read had a cheesemonger hitting his brother, a street vendor, over the head with one such plaster Venus he was selling as part of his wares.)

⁴⁰⁶ Peacock, 122

⁴⁰⁷ See University of Southampton’s online course, *Wellington and The Battle of Waterloo*, “Achilles and the Ladies of England.” Online, <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/wellington-and-waterloo/1/steps/35648>

⁴⁰⁸ Turner, 46-47.

Canova is also topical to Peacock's novel and Woolf's story given that Canova's "Nude of Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker"(1802) had just arrived in England before the erection of the Achilles sculpture. The piece was commissioned by Napoleon but given to the Duke of Wellington as war loot. When Napoleon first saw the eight foot marble sculpture that presented him magnificently Greek and deified (and therefore completely naked), he purportedly responded, "trop athlétique" and hid it from public display. Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, however, proudly displayed the Canova like a war trophy in front of his banister at his private residence in Hyde Park, Apsley House⁴⁰⁹, steps from the entrance whereby the public monument to him and his embodiment as the English Achilles were to stand.

There, then, are Phyllis and Rosamond in their Victorian drawing room that is the model of propriety. In the few moments they have between morning errands and lunch guests, Rosamond casually picks up a copy of Pater's *Greek Studies*, and before their uncanny encounter with the liberated Tristram sisters—the very modern models of an Aspasia and Lais, one might imagine, liberated from a reverend/doctor who would have them naturally virginal, insipid, and at home preparing dinner—Lady Hibbert concludes the young ladies' afternoon of calls with “the slow passage through the Park, making one of the procession of gay carriages which travel at a foot's pace at that hour round the statue of Achilles.”⁴¹⁰ Nearly the same scene plays out in *Jacob's Room* with more explicit irony. Clara Durrant, with Jacob on her mind, walks past the Wellington Monument:

The loop of the railing beneath the statue of Achilles was full of parasols and waistcoats; chains and bangles; of ladies and gentlemen, lounging elegantly, lightly observant.

⁴⁰⁹ See full story of Canova's nude: <http://rijksmuseumamsterdam.blogspot.cz/2012/10/met-antonio-canova-napoleon-as-mars.html>

⁴¹⁰ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 23

‘This statue was erected by the women of England...’ Clara read out with a foolish little laugh.⁴¹¹

In the same series of vignettes, Jacob draws “a plan of the Parthenon in the dust in Hyde Park” soon after his return to Greece. In anticipation of that trip, a newly educated man from Cambridge, Jacob reads Plato’s *Phaedrus* in view of the British Museum he’d just visited,

And there the Elgin Marbles lie, all night long, old Jones’s [the museum security guard’s] lantern sometimes recalling Ulysses...and Jacob, was reading the *Phaedrus*, heard...the woman battering at the door and crying, ‘Let me in!’ as if a coal had dropped from the fire, or a fly, falling from the ceiling, had lain on its back, too weak to run over.”⁴¹²

If the statues of Venus in *Crotchet’s Castle* are to be covered with petticoats so that the men of England aren’t immodestly aroused, the statue of Achilles stands in homage to the British patriarchy, the spoils of war secured for the British Empire and the ensuing prosperity of Victoria’s England. There stands the war hero of Homer’s *Iliad*, modeled on the Pentelican marble from Phidias and the Parthenon, signifying the transfer of martial authority from Periclean Athens to Wellington’s England. Whether a male or female nude, a symbol of Love or War (and the physical Greek ideal of both), they are in possession of the patriarchy. A woman might scream “let me in!” at the foot of the British Museum, but the erection of the Greek ideal, and the triumphal passage of it from Plato to young men admitted to the museum’s reading room, remains Jacob’s, the ‘Oxbridge’ male’s prerogative.

⁴¹¹ *Complete Works of Virginia Woolf*, ebook, Loc 15411.

* 5.6: FROM GREEK SOLIDS TO LIQUIDS—THE FEMININE LINEAGE IN WOOLF

What Matthew Arnold did to idealize the literature and state of ancient Greece borrowed in part from the larger, burgeoning tradition of art criticism in England in the 19th century. Hegel's historic idealism had taken hold in England in the latter half of the century, but it was the Johann J. Winckelmann's essays on Grecian art that popularized the notion of the ideal Hellene whose sun-drenched climate contributed to a culture where man (and the artist sculpting him) can stand in relation to nature as a prelapsarian ideal—an Adam walking naked without need of a Hebraic narrative (as in Arnold) that will clothe him in original sin by myth's end.⁴¹³ “Too natural,” retorts the Doctor Reverend in Peacock, but for the most influential Victorian art historian John Ruskin, that nudity and sensuality, in the hands of the Greeks, possessed a natural childlike innocence that had been repressed by Christian culture. The Greek ideal was more perfected because it was closer to nature, not further removed from it. In *Modern Painters* Ruskin famously asserts that “The Greek lived, in all things, a healthy, and in a certain degree, a perfect life. He had no morbid or sickly feeling of any kind.”⁴¹⁴ Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses* (1790), influenced by Winckelmann, had certainly impacted Ruskin and others. The most dominant artistic voice in England before Ruskin, Reynolds aspired to search for a Platonic kind of ideal beauty in the art object, to turn not just to natural form but to the works of the great masters to find the moral tincture and form necessary for perfection.⁴¹⁵ To Winckelmann, ultimately, can we attribute both Arnold's and Woolf's turn to the climates of Greece and England to define the unclouded and clear vision of the Greeks versus the obfuscating haze and

⁴¹² Complete Works, loc 14591.

⁴¹³ Again, see Turner, pages 40-48.

⁴¹⁴ *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols., ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), 5:230.

⁴¹⁵ See Reynolds's *Discourses Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy*, ed. Roger Fry (London: Seeley and Co., 1905). As a prime example: “The Art which we profess has beauty for its object; this it is our business to discover and to express; the beauty of which we are in quest is general and intellectual; it is an idea that subsists only in the individual; the sight never beheld

emotional thickets of English artistry. The English, in this view of artistic temperament, lived in the cave of Plato's Republic, whereas the severe, southern climate of Greece gave it the greater power of the sun's clear-skyed illumination.

This aggregate formation of the Greek ideal had become commonplace, promulgated by authors as varied as the German Hellenists translated into English, then by the prime examples of Ruskin and Arnold, and additionally the Victorian mid-century popularizers of Plato—Richard Nettleship and Benjamin Jowett at Oxford in particular⁴¹⁶. Whatever England lacked or aspired to, there was this ideal available to fill it. The male line, Theodore Koulouris succinctly summarizes, was "characterized by serenity, clarity, reason, restraint, grandeur, and collectedness (as exalted in the proportionate lines and shapes of classical sculpture and architecture)."⁴¹⁷

Such a collection of Greek statuary and sculpture in England gave archeologists and anthropologists much to work with, and such an idealized version of Hellenism was originally shared by Jane Ellen Harrison as well. Her early work *Introductory Studies in Greek Art* (1885) put the vision of the ideal perhaps most explicitly in her introductory remarks, espousing that her goal would be accomplished "...if, by the help of the wisdom of Plato,...I can show any of the citizens of our state why...they may nurture their souls on the fair sights and pure visions of Ideal art."⁴¹⁸ Plato's thoughts on the universality of forms and the ideal types had indeed been generalized by Harrison, early on, as the universal thoughts of all ancient Greece. Though they had "every opportunity for the development of realism," ['Realism' in contemporary English art being Harrison's straw man for the supremacy of Grecian art], "the Greek deliberately and

it, nor has the hand expressed it...and conducting the thoughts through successive stages of excellence, till that contemplation of universal rectitude and harmony which began by Taste, may, as it is exalted and refined, conclude in Virtue." p. 264.

⁴¹⁶ for the role of Nettleship and Jowett, see "The Victorian Platonic Revival" in Turner's *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, 369-446.

⁴¹⁷ *Hellenism and Loss in the Works of Virginia Woolf*. p. 40.

consciously rejects it.” Even in a votive statue, “We see here the promptings of that instinct for generalization, that rising from the particular to the universal, which for the Greek issued ultimately in the highest idealism.⁴¹⁹” In order to discover the sweetness and light of Greek art, England had to come out of the cave of its contemporary art scene, Harrison suggests.

Such conventional statements on Grecian art that both Ruskin and Arnold would approve and recognize come as Harrison’s own self-critique when she introduces her thesis in *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* almost twenty years later. By this time, her work alongside that of her fellow Cambridge Ritualists and J.G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890), had subjected the Greek ideal to evolutionary time and prehistory. Quoting Ruskin as a foil instead of borrowing his ideas, Harrison writes,

In characterizing the genius of the Greeks, Mr. Ruskin says: “there is no dread in their hearts; pensiveness, amazement, often deepest grief and desolation, but terror never.

Everlasting calm in the presence of all Fate, and joy such as they might win, not indeed from perfect beauty, but from beauty at perfect rest.”

She then proceeds to articulate how the highest achievements in Greek literature and sculpture—achievements Ruskin, Arnold, and others had idealized as “beauty at perfect rest”—is not the same as *ritual*, the more primal and therefore primordial aspect of religion wherein origins, the irrational, and indeed fear can be found. By “viewing Greek religion exclusively through the medium of Greek literature,” Harrison argues that we mistake a culminating work like Homer’s for a timeless statement—“The Olympians of Homer are no more primitive than his hexameters. Beneath this splendid surface lies a stratum of religious conceptions, ideas of evil, of purification, of atonement. . . . It is this substratum of religious conceptions, at once more primitive

⁴¹⁸ London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1885, p. vii.

and more permanent, that I am concerned to investigate."⁴²⁰ Whereas Arnold and the idealists had given us only Olympia, Harrison gives us the Chthonic, the ecstatic, the primitive, and she inverts the whole notion of *permanence* as the surface serenity that gazing too long at the solidity of marble had illusively provided.

While Harrison is not alone by 1903 in attending to this darker side of Greek culture, not merely her fellow Cambridge Ritualists⁴²¹ but significantly Freidrich Nietzsche and James Frazer in such seminal works as *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and *The Golden Bough* (1890),⁴²² it was Harrison's greater attention to gender that reveals a correlating pattern in Woolf. Especially in the companion work *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins in Greek Religion* (1911), Harrison interprets the serene, dispassionate states of the Greek contemplating his gods in relation to his world with what such a veneer represses. Rather than the "patrilinear culture" that the Olympians came to represent, Harrison found the older, more vital and grounded "matrilinear society" in the earliest evidence of the "women's festivals," the mysteries in the worship of Dionysis, Orpheus and most significantly in the newly discovered "Hymn of the Kouretes." Grecian life was not ultimately the form seen, but the emotion felt, whether it be dread or fear or ecstasy, and those works that seem emblems of ideal order and eternal stability instead symbolize the expurgation of those emotions. These sacred rituals embody what was alive in Greek culture, and if you were to find what endures in the Greek ideal, you find what is most human and collective. Rather than beauty at perfect rest, hers was a Grecian world alive and vibrant in flux and transformation.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴²⁰ *Prolegomena*, 1-2.

⁴²¹ Usually included in this list along with Harrison are William Robertson Smith, anthropologists F.M. Cornford, Gilbert Murray (at Oxford), and A.B. Cook. By most accounts, including Robert Ackerman's definitive study on the Cambridge Ritualists, Harrison is at the very center of the group and the most passionate, forceful contributor.

⁴²² see *The Myth and Ritual School: J. G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists* by Robert Ackerman. (New York: Rutledge, 1991).

Not surprisingly, this is why Frank Turner, Robert Ackerman, and other scholars who have studied Harrison's impact in the field of anthropology agree with Turner's assessment of her as one of the most influential "Evolutionary Humanistic Hellenists."⁴²³ Her appeal is obvious to feminist studies of Woolf, which have solidified the significant ways her example, scholarship, and indeed relationship became important to Woolf.⁴²⁴ Harrison was that rare woman who had knocked down the door when the "Beadles" of *A Room of Ones Own* stood in the way, protecting their male homosocial culture and preventing entrance. She not only studied at the British Museum; she worked there under the mentorship of Charles Newton. One of the early graduates of Newnham College then became its most preeminent professor and scholar, the alluded to and sometimes unnamed female figure in many of Woolf's works.⁴²⁵ What remains to be discovered is how Harrison's ecstatic embrace of evolutionary theory, as well as philosophers and thinkers equally impacted by Darwin such as Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and William James, transformed this female lineage of Hellenism to an evolutionary Hellenistic lineage. Together with these

⁴²³ Frank Turner's term for the Hellenistic movement of the latter half of the 19th century that turned to Darwin's theory as the impetus to discover origins in the field.

⁴²⁴ See, for starters, Patricia Malka, *Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Jane Harrison's Con/Spiracy*. Studies in Modern Literature (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987); Jane Marcus, "Taking the Bull by the Udders: Sexual Difference in Virginia Woolf—A Conspiracy Theory." *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁴²⁵ Woolf famously alludes to her in *A Room of Ones Own* in the first chapter, the culminating scene of her reverie traipsing through Fernham on beautiful Spring evening before the reality of October and an insipid serving of soup interrupts the fantasy:

...but in this light they were phantoms only, half guessed, half seen...then on the terrace, as if popping out to breathe the air, to glance at the garden, came a bent figure, formidable yet humble, with her great forehead and her shabby dress—could it be the famous scholar, could it be J— H— herself? (17)

The Woolf's Hogarth Press had just published Harrison's autobiography, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (1925) a few years previous to the publication of *Room*, and Woolf's acquaintance and friendship, not to mention her influence upon Woolf's feminism, is well documented during Woolf's mature work from *To the Lighthouse* to *The Waves*, but the shadow of Jane Ellen Harrison also makes an earlier guest appearance in Jacob's Room:

Miss Umphelby sings him melodiously enough, accurately too, ...and then, taking her way up the avenue towards Newnham, she lets her fancy play upon other details of men's meeting with women which have never got into print. Her lectures, therefore, are not half so well attended as those of Cowen, and the thing she might have said in elucidation of the text for ever left out. In short, face a teacher with the image of the taught and the mirror breaks. (42)

figures emerges the influence of Walter Pater, another key aesthetic influence on Woolf who is surprisingly one of the foremost 'Evolutionary Hellenists.' His application of Platonic idealism as a centripetal force anchoring itself atop the Heraclitean stream allows Woolf, with the stimulating ideas of Harrison, to dynamically strike the balance between the Greek moments of vision and the Darwinian moments of being.

Arguing as much also reinforces why clean, linear timelines that delineate 'influence' with Woolf are not nearly as successful as discovering what resonates with Woolf and her fiction. And why the "male lineage" of the Greek ideal in Woolf, as clearly present as it is, acts more like a complex, ambivalent, contradictory sphere. Woolf absolutely thrilled in her autonomous and voracious study of Greek language, literature and philosophy, and to be a voracious reader of Victorian literature was also to engage in the atmosphere of the writers who tapped most into her favorite early disciplines of Greek and natural history as they manifested themselves in fiction and non-fiction. The Greek ideal, just as it had been for Matthew Arnold, became a working metaphor for Woolf.

But though she could and would borrow much conceptually from Arnold and other representatives of the male line in her formulation of Greek "solidity," his version of Greekness also represents "paid for culture," as she memorably puts the question of education years later in *Three Guineas* (1938). There, in Chapter 3 (her third guinea to pay), Woolf's interlocutor is a letter from a young, educated man soliciting her counsel to avoid war and, in so doing, asking her to pledge with him "to protect culture and intellectual liberty."⁴²⁶ Woolf and all the "daughters of educated men" have paid and paid for that culture, the one Arnold and his ilk so passionately espoused, "from 1262 to 1870." Woolf writes:

⁴²⁶ *Three Guineas*, "Three," (New York: Harcourt, 1938), p. 85

The question which concerns us is what possible help we can give you in protecting culture and intellectual liberty—we, who have been shut out from the universities so repeatedly, and are only now admitted so restrictedly; we who have received no paid-for education whatsoever, or so little that we can only read our own tongue and write our own language....

And now, clearly, some further definition of 'culture and intellectual liberty' would be useful... We need not consult Milton, Goethe, or Matthew Arnold; for their definition would apply to paid-for culture.⁴²⁷

Matthew Arnold as the author of *Culture and Anarchy* cannot answer to the irrationalism that brought about WWI and what Woolf could clearly see as the onset of WWII and the spread of militant fascism. The Arnold brand of Hellenism, by obfuscating all aspects of it that didn't agree with a serene Hellene, left a dialogue with itself incomplete. Frank Turner's assessment of Matthew Arnold's deficiency is worth giving the last word:

Their Hellenism almost denied the existence of the nonrational, aggressive, and self-destructive impulses in humankind. Arnoldian Hellenism promised that an embracing of the secular and finite would carry no significant social or psychological cost. As a consequence, while the voices of that mode of Hellenism and of humanism have been unfailingly eloquent and nobly intentioned, their thought and their prescriptions for modern culture have been rendered impotent by the larger events of this century.⁴²⁸

In "A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus," the Thoby Stephen character remains permanently etched in the ascent and descent Woolf memorialized in one of her last shared

⁴²⁷ *Ibid*, 86-90

⁴²⁸ *Greek Heritage*, 36.

experiences with her brother. *Jacob's Room* allows her brother to come home from his Greek journeys, heroic and solidified in his ideas of his own emerging identity as a Cambridge man among the the rulers of the British Empire. Instead of Thoby's death from Typhoid Fever, Jacob falls "*In Flanders Fields*" where "*the poppies grow / Between the crosses, row on row.*"⁴²⁹ There Woolf's satire is thoroughly ironized and elegiac. While nothing would be so charming and profoundly liberating to Woolf as the presence beginning in 1904 of the Cambridge Bloomsburies, their paid for culture could not completely pave the way for hers. Phyllis and Rosamond and her Victorian past she was no longer, but the younger Hibbert sister Doris is studying to go to college, we are told in the same story. It is Doris's copy of Walter Pater's *Greek Studies*, we might assume, that Phyllis borrows.

⁴²⁹ Woolf derives the surname of Jacob Flanders from Flanders Field, one of the bloodiest battlefields of WWI. John McCrae's patriotic poem "In Flanders Fields" became the most famous jingoistic call to continue the fight of the dead soldiers. See Paul Fussell's seminal *The Great War and Modern Memory* for an excellent exegesis of this poem in the context of WWI poetry.

Chapter Six

The *Moment* behind Virginia Woolf's Being: A Brief Stretch in Darwinian Time and Platonic Form from Pater to Woolf

*SOME VERSIONS OF THE TEMPORAL

Transitioning from the Victorian heritage of Greek thought to the Modern assimilation of it, I begin where Chapter Five ended, with Jane Ellen Harrison. Her establishment of a matrilinear example for Greek studies, based as it is on evolutionary principle, finds kinship with Woolf's emerging fictional aesthetic and incorporation of Greek imagery and thought into that aesthetic. It is then necessary to depart Cambridge and explore the writings of that obscure Oxford don, Walter Pater. His assimilation of the pre-Socratic philosophy of Heraclitus to Darwin will be treated in some length here, because it gives specificity to the convergence of the impact of evolutionary theory with the great passion for the backward glance of history, especially Hellenism. The emergent intersections of both preoccupations provoke some of the more prevalent dialogues and disagreements in Modern philosophy and art. Many of the ideals that have Greek thought as their foundation were subjected to both an historical reading and an evolutionary process. The Greek ideal is indeed often personified in the figure of Plato, on the polar end of Darwin's argument against immutability and fixed forms, and he becomes the other, ancient immensity that tips over or weighs down a position, depending upon where each poises the fulcrum of his arguments and beliefs. So Friedrich Nietzsche will make Dionysus and not Heraclitus or Plato his philosophical contemporary, and still try to rid the world of its historical disease, the influx of an evolutionary plague infecting an Hegelian "world process." As an alternative, Nietzsche will value "becoming" an overman rather than becoming an evolutionary

“has-been.” Henri Bergson, quite comfortable at his presupposed topmost branch of evolution, will find the temporal the right place for consciousness and creativity, his “real duration” an evolutionary time meant to correct Plato’s misshapen, spatial logic. William James will agree with Bergson, and see consciousness as a stream we habitually travel. To free that stream of “absolute” debris—so that pragmatism may relieve individual beliefs after Darwin renders truths as mutable as species—will be the partial and provisional truths James may claim for us. The most vigilant response to James, Bergson, and Nietzsche is Bertrand Russell’s, whose logical empiricism will not take Darwin’s temporal upheaval as a possible valuative term, no matter what the terms. His and G. E. Moore’s example were the strongest for the male members of Bloomsbury, but the Cambridge connection does not mean Woolf merely appropriated their position when she sought to develop a new aesthetics for fiction. The “moment” in Woolf’s fictional experimentations in temporality; her own readings of Darwin and the writers who responded to him; her complex, feminist perspective created out of these altering positions generates a narrative process that was protean in shape but singularly dynamic in its engagement with evolutionary theory and classical form. This chapter’s argumentative destination will lead us up to Woolf’s inheritance of these dilemmas that came to inform her aesthetics. Ultimately, using Harrison’s assimilation of the thinkers and philosophers here provides us a new way of seeing Woolf in relation to them. With this we may draw some insight into the dialectic formed from the striking stability of the Platonic moment of vision dissolved and subsumed into the Darwinian moments of being, Woolf’s abiding image and working metaphor for her culmination of these ideas the “semi-transparent envelope.” Together it offers a more complete “prefiguration,” to borrow Ricoeur’s parlance, to Woolf’s narrative configuration. This destination has many routes through the currents of Modernist thought.

✧ 6. 2: EVOLUTIONARY HELLENISM—JANE ELLEN HARRISON'S GREEK DARWINIAN WOMEN

There have been many important studies of Woolf's kinship and indebtedness to Harrison, particularly in two profound ways. First, Harrison provides Woolf with models of female scholarship and intellect to counter the misogynistic, sexist arguments she anticipates and indeed answers in such seminal essays and works as *A Room of One's Own* (1928), "The Intellectual Status of Women" (1929), and *Three Guineas* (1938). Harrison stood as Woolf's perfect rebuttal to the remarks, even of longstanding friend and Cambridge Apostle Desmond McCarthy, who under his pseudonym "Affable Hawk" agreed with Arnold Bennett's statement in *The New Statesman* that "women are inferior to men" and "no amount of education and liberty of action will sensibly alter it." Woolf revisits *A Room of One's Own* and her study of women, profession, and fiction through the centuries, offering this reply: "When I compare the Duchess of Newcastle with Jane Austen, the matchless Orinda with Emily Bronte, Jane Grey with Jane Harrison, the advance in intellectual power seems to me not only sensible but immense... and the effects of education and liberty scarcely to be overrated."⁴³⁰ She is, in short, Woolf's iconic symbol and model of female scholarship and intellectual capacity. That kinship and resonance are especially powerful since Harrison's primary and most significant works in the field of anthropology concentrate on Grecian antiquity, which we have established as an essential influence and abiding passion in Woolf.

Second—and arguably just as importantly, though the two remain in Woolf intertextually, culturally, and personally related—Harrison's research into "matrilinear society" in Greek religion, ritual, and literature provides Woolf a fecundity of metaphorical possibilities

and mythological overtones that Woolf then metamorphoses into a Modernist, feminist literature of her own.⁴³¹ The Demeter/Persephone layering of the mythic element in the Mrs. Ramsay/Lily Briscoe characters of *To the Lighthouse*, for instance, unearthed by critic Tina Barr, and the associations of the aloof Olympian male deity in the form of Mr. Ramsay, laid out by critic Martha Carpentier, both offer compelling readings of Harrison's impact on perhaps Woolf's most important novel. Jane Marcus first suggested the use of Harrison's thesis in *Themis* to see the charwomen of "Time Passes" in *To the Lighthouse* and Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts* as the "prepatriarchal" figures who respectively restore order and preside over the rituals and performances of the novels.⁴³² The Greek resonances in Woolf's fiction, the masculine ones that attach to her characters in description or bearing, who stand as aloof and marmoreal as the Olympian gods; or the feminine ones who perform rituals of purgation and mystery worthy of Chthonic or Eleusian ceremony, are unquestionably indebted to Harrison.

Indeed, Theodore Koulouris' booklength exploration of Woolf's "Greekness" locates Jane Ellen Harrison as the key branch of Woolf's "female lineage" in her Hellenism. This alternative to the one most influentially proposed by Matthew Arnold's Greek ideal of "sweetness and light" instead focuses attention on the "'darker' line" that "calls into question" Arnold's traditional designations "by focusing attention on the primitive, chthonic element of its religious sentiment."⁴³³ This includes, in Koulouris's synthesis, "the ritualistic and mythical element; the religiosity; the violence; the excess; the irrationality." While such designations and delineations

⁴³⁰ "The Intellectual Status of Women," first published in *The New Statesman*, Oct. 9, 1929.

⁴³¹ As mentioned in previous chapters, the studies are numerous, with the most important being Martha C. Carpentier, *Ritual, myth, and the modernist text: the influence of Jane Ellen Harrison on Joyce, Eliot and Woolf*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1998. Patricia Malka, *Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Jane Harrison's Con/Spiracy*. Studies in Modern Literature (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987); Jane Marcus, "Taking the Bull by the Udders: Sexual Difference in Virginia Woolf—A Conspiracy Theory." *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁴³² Tina Barr's argument appears in "Divine Politics: Virginia Woolf's Journey toward Eleusis in *To the Lighthouse*. *boundary 2*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 125-145. Martha Carpentier's in the above-mentioned *Ritual, myth, and the modernist text*, "Chapter 7: Themis in *To the Lighthouse*; Jane Harrison and Virginia Woolf," pp. 171-193. Jane Marcus for starters in *The Languages of Patriarchy* (cited above) and *Art and Anger*, Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1988, p. 93.

seem to castigate women and thrust them back into the dark ages (or perhaps even more aptly the stone ages), "darkness" in its application here has a positive value and originating designation as Harrison comes to embrace it. It is not unlike Theodor Adorno's negative dialectic that proffers a "negative knowledge of the actual world,"⁴³⁴ a knowledge that Harrison comes to embrace rather than repress..

Behind both of these important contributions to Woolf's aesthetic via Harrison is their shared engagement with Darwin. An intriguing thought isn't simply that, of the great writers who were influenced by Harrison including Joyce and Eliot, Woolf was the one most familiar and acquainted with both the person and her work. "She knew Harrison personally from 1904 to her death in 1928," writes Carpentier, "visited her in Cambridge, London, and Paris, and referred to her familiarly in diaries and letters as "Jane" or "dear old Jane."⁴³⁵ Virginia and Leonard Woolf not only had copies of most all of Harrison's major works, one of them even personally inscribed by Harrison and given to Virginia as a Christmas gift.⁴³⁶ Their Hogarth Press in fact published Harrison's memoir *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (1925) as well as the translations of Harrison's lover, partner and most devoted student, Hope Mirrless. When Woolf had the pleasure of visiting "Jane" in France in the summer 1923, she recounted to Jacques Raveret how much "This gallant old lady, very white, hoary, and sublime in a lace mantilla, took my fancy greatly" not just for her appearance but for "her superb high thinking agnostic ways." Harrison praised Woolf and her sister, along with her Lytton Strachey, as the only members of their generation she can respect because they had not, post-war, succumbed to religious dogma. "There are thousands of Darwins," Woolf responded. By this Woolf meant the world was still

⁴³³ Koulouris, 40.

⁴³⁴ Adorno's famous postulation of Modernism's "negative dialectics" appeared posthumously in *Aesthetic Theory*, 1970.

⁴³⁵ "Themis in *To the Lighthouse*," 171.

⁴³⁶ I am indebted to Jane Marcus for pointing this out after she researched the library holdings of Leonard and Virginia Woolf. *The Languages of Patriarchy*, p. 195.

safe and hospitable to agnosticism and scholars, but Harrison took the statement literally as Darwin's children— "traitors!" she dubs them in their conversions to orthodox beliefs: "'With that name!' She cried, 'that inheritance! That magnificent record in the past!'"⁴³⁷

Harrison's engagement with Charles Darwin is undoubtedly profound, and this is why Robert Ackerman deems her one of the most prominent *evolutionary* anthropologists of the era, perhaps the most prominent since at the center of Cambridge Ritualists and, alongside James Frazer, accorded the most prestige by her contemporaries.⁴³⁸ While Frazer gets much of the attention, rightfully so for *The Golden Bough's* influential, erudite, and comprehensive contribution in comparative evolutionary anthropology, it is Harrison who remains faithful to the evolutionary tenets of Frazer's religious and cultural studies.⁴³⁹ The third aspect of Harrison's importance for Woolf, I suggest, is how Harrison's evolutionary anthropology transitions from an epistemological to an ontological study of Greek art and religion. By incorporating Henri Bergson's premise in *Creative Evolution* of "dure'e" or "concrete duration," Harrison reevaluates the role of the irrational and ritualistic vestiges in Greek antiquity by embracing the collective, unifying principles of a Grecian matrilinear society behind the male Olympian remoteness of the 5th century BC. In other words, ways of seeing the Athens of Pericles evolved from the ritualistic, cultural procession of Greek life, one deeply conscious of the pre-Socratic and prehistorical, an analysis that binds the Greek ideal to evolutionary process. The experience of reading much of Woolf's vacillations between the solid and shifting revisits Harrison's own movements in scholarship; Woolf's moments of vision metamorphose into moments of being in a process that perpetually fuses the Greek and evolutionary vacillations into the structure of her writing.

⁴³⁷ *Letters Vol. 3, p. 58.*

Harrison offers her most explicit appreciation of Charles Darwin, as well as his impact and influence upon her and other anthropologists, in her contribution to Charles Seward's compendium of *Darwin and Modern Science* (1909). In this collection gathered in celebration of the centennial of Darwin's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of *The Origin of Species*, Harrison begins, "The title of my paper might well have been 'the creation by Darwinism of the scientific study of Religions,' but that I feared to mar my tribute to a great name by any shadow of exaggeration."⁴⁴⁰ In broad but precise strokes, Harrison uses the canvas of evolutionary theory to explain how the study of religion became grounds for scientific study after Darwin, something that would have been anathema and improbable before him and without him. Harrison compares the "normal attitude" towards religion previous to *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, and then makes "manifest that it is the doctrine of evolution that has made this [new] outlook possible and even necessary."⁴⁴¹ She argues that Darwin's vision at the end of *The Origin of Species* where, "In the future I see open fields for far more important researches," including psychology, laid the groundwork for looking to "the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation."⁴⁴² By not only arguing but showing (and thereby proving) through a protracted, carefully crafted excess of example and evidence, Darwin brought to biology the gradualist principles of geology whereby nature does not make leaps; the "continuity of life" is a process of gradation like the sediments on the tangled bank where Darwin's endless forms are evolving. Thus, for the students of both "the classics and religion,"—Harrison points

⁴³⁸ See, again, Ackerman's *James Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*, but also his "Introduction" to Harrison's *Prolegomena*. Mythos edition. (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1991.)

⁴³⁹ See Ackerman's Introduction to *Prolegomena*, xviii.

⁴⁴⁰ *Darwin and Modern Science: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Charles Darwin and of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Publication of The Origin of Species*, ed. by A.C. Seward. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), p. 473.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 474.

⁴⁴² *Origin of Species*, 394.

out "the most conservative of subjects,"—the call to apply Darwin's "creative ferment was slow indeed to work."⁴⁴³

As Harrison saw early on, when *The Origin of Species* hypothesizes that "Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history,"⁴⁴⁴ this illumination after *The Descent of Man* had to include, in spite of the heretical thoughts it induced, both the religions of "primitive" culture as well as current religious practice in dear old Platonic England. With dogma and the "revelatory" nature of religious doctrine, "the teleological scheme" was "complete and unalterable....Religion, so conceived, left no place for development."⁴⁴⁵ A religious dogma is a thing learned but not critically examined--that is to say in Harrison's vernacular not yet examined from the perspective of evolutionary origins and function. Harrison enjoys here contemplating the Judeo-Christian beliefs taken as doctrinal fact that sound as implausible as any "primitive" myth or religion, from the snake in the garden to anthropomorphic gods to virgin births being translated and transmitted by missionaries from England to the "savages." As Edward Tylor was first to explore and expose in *Primitive Culture* (1871), evolutionary theory applied to religious study and the field of anthropology could produce significant results and shed the light Darwin had predicted.⁴⁴⁶ Just like man is not above or beyond the mechanism of natural selection and evolution, neither is the Anglican Christian exempt from a study of religious origins and what is "primitive."

After reading and absorbing Darwin and Tylor, Harrison's scholarship ceased to seek the ideal or the perfect Greek, or in a Ruskin or Arnold fashion actively repress that which did not cohere with such idealization. She instead brought time and process to bear on her investigations

⁴⁴³ *Darwin and Modern Science*, 476.

⁴⁴⁴ *Origin of Species*, 394.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 475.

and scholarly excavations of Grecian art, ritual, and religion. Vestiges of origin and descent were to be found everywhere, from the birth of tragedy not just as Nietzsche philosophized and the ancients reported, but as the artifacts on the Elgin Parthenon frieze recreated. There were the original primitive effigies and provincial daemon spirits informing the rituals surrounding the anthropomorphic deities of the Homeric hymns. Religion in Harrison becomes primal, a thing enacted and not simply (or originally) contemplated in a text: "But man has ritual as well as mythology; that is, he feels and acts as well as thinks; nay more he probably feels and acts long before he definitely thinks."⁴⁴⁷ Before the mythological becomes theological in Harrison's estimation, the story or sculpture was a thing done for a collective, cultural reason. In *Prolegomena*, she mentions that "We are so possessed by a set of conceptions based on Periclean Athens, by ideas of law and order and reason and limit, that we are apt to dismiss as 'mythological' whatever does not fit into our stereotyped picture."⁴⁴⁸ After Darwin's impact, the 6th century of Greece, as well as all before it, became more profoundly important, because less understood, than the 5th century. Harrison rephrases this Darwinian notion more broadly in her memoir when she writes, "A thing has little charm for me unless it has on it the patina of age. Great things in literature, Greek plays for example, I most enjoy when behind their bright splendours I see moving darker and older shapes."⁴⁴⁹ Origins are everywhere.

With religion and its rituals now operating under the same naturalistic principles of descent and evolution, Harrison, without guise of impartiality, begins to prefer the earthly, the Chthonic, and even the irrational tendencies behind Greek worship, the Dionysian over the Apollonian, to use Nietzsche's valuative terms that Harrison, too, voraciously digested. At this

⁴⁴⁶ Darwin, as Harrison points out, in fact wrote to Tylor after reading *Primitive Culture*, noting, 'It is wonderful how you trace animism from the lower races up the religious belief of the highest races. It will make me for the future look at religion—'a belief in the should, etc.'—from a new point of view.'" (476)

⁴⁴⁷ *Darwin and Modern Science*, 482.

⁴⁴⁸ 397.

point of contemplating Darwin's influence, Harrison was well underway in her sequel to *Prolegomena*, the equally important *Themis*, where she will make Darwinian evolutionary principles the key instruments of exegesis and anthropological excavation: "No one now thinks he can have an adequate knowledge of Greek art without the study of the Mycenaean and Minoan periods," Harrison writes, "and since the roots of religion strike as deep as or deeper than the roots of art, no one now will approach the study of the Olympian Zeus without seeking for the origin of the god in his reputed birth-place."⁴⁵⁰ Her writing exudes a barely contained elation, that the material now being studied and unearthed is "so primitive that we seem at last to get back to the very beginnings of Greek religion....It lets us see myth as well as ritual in the making, it will even disclose certain elements that lie deep embedded in early Greek philosophy."⁴⁵¹

This was the "Hymn of the Kouretes," an archeological discovery at Palaikastro unearthed at the temple of the Diktaean Zeus; this delighted Harrison because it "embodied this very group-thinking, or rather group-emotion towards life, which I had begun to see must underlie all primitive religious representations."⁴⁵² For Harrison, the Hymn fulfills a theory born from her study that the Olympian deities were a late, not an early flowering of religion, that these "Olympians were not only non-primitive, but positively in a sense non-religious." Her "Introduction" to *Themis* still reads with an élan and conviction and a delightful partisanship that brought Harrison her critics, but how forceful today still reads the invocational lines:

The Olympian gods—that is, the anthropomorphic gods of Homer and Pheidias and the mythographers—seemed to me like a bouquet of cut-flowers whose bloom is brief,

⁴⁴⁹ Qtd. by Ackerman in his "Introduction" to *Prolegomena*, p. xix.

⁴⁵⁰ *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1912. Ebook reprinted by Google.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

because they have been severed from their roots. To find those roots we must burrow deep into a lower stratum of thought, into those chthonic cults which underly their life and from which sprang all their brilliant blossoming.⁴⁵³

Harrison's instincts, she says, were to "condemn" the Olympians as products of art and religion rather than the felt life of actual, primitive Hellenistic ritual, but the discovery of the Hymn gave her an even more profound insight—that Zeus and the other Olympians of patrilinear descent evolved from an earlier social structure that was matrilinear.

Borrowing from Frazer but imaginatively extending what might be inferred from the origins of deities in agriculture and vegetation, Harrison avers that when the Olympians are divested of their plant or animal form, the result is "strangely, significantly negative." In this "process of extrusion from nature," the Olympians lost their "Enaitus-daimon," Harrison's own term for the natural waxing and waning yearly "world process of decay, death, renewal." It is telling that Harrison gives agency to the Olympians in their aloofness, remarking that "The Greek Gods, in their triumphant humanity, kicked down that ladder from earth to heaven by which they rose." They ascended to the clouds of Olympus, cut flowers indeed, and this shift of attention and religious focus "from Earth to Sky, tended to remove the gods from man; they were purged but at the price of remoteness." Harrison continues,

It is characteristic of an Olympian, as contrasted with a mystery-god like Dionysos, that his form is rigidly fixed and always human. The Zeus of Pheidias or of Homer cannot readily shift his shape and become a bird, a bull, a snake, a tree. The Olympian has come out from the natural facts that begot him, and has become 'idealized.' . . . He must have human form and the most beautiful human form; human intellect and the highest human

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

intellect. He must not suffer and fail and die; he must be ever blessed, ageless and deathless. It is only a step further to the conscious philosophy which will deny to God any human frailties, any emotions, any wrath or jealousy, and ultimately any character whatever except dead, unmeaning perfection, incapable of movement or change.⁴⁵⁴

Here, in other words, is Arnold's Greek ideal of sweetness and light inverted so that its example is a negation of life, not a vital contribution to culture, and in its ideal human perfection, eternal rather than temporal, a form divorced from humanity and incapable of movement and change.

Severed as such from their origins, these Olympians are abstractions, things thought rather than things done, to use one of Harrison's favorite distinctions, and in arriving at tendencies of the patrilinear and matrilinear religious practices, "these Olympians represent that tendency in thought which is towards reflection, differentiation, clearness, while the Eniautos-Daimon [the matrilinear] represents that other tendency in religion towards emotion, union, indivisibility. It might almost be said that the Olympians stand for articulate consciousness, the Eniautos-Daimon for the sub-conscious."⁴⁵⁵ Harrison makes her reading quite explicit that the social structure at play within her study of ancient art and ritual pairs the Olympians with "the same as the modern family, it is patrilinear." Dionysos is the one adapting Olympian whose relation to his mother and the Maenads refer back to the earlier matrilinear social structure, but they all originate from the primal, collective, unifying matrilineage.

And this is crucial, as what unifies both "lineages" is this figure of "Themis" derived from the Hymn of the Kouretes—"Above the gods, supreme, eternally dominant, stands the figure of Themis. She is social ordinance, the collective conscience projected, the Law or Custom that is Right." Harrison endows Themis with such power and animism that she

⁴⁵⁴ *Themis*, "Introduction," ebook.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

represents that aspect of totem religions whereby "man and nature form one indivisible whole....behind Gaia the Mother, and above even Zeus the Father, stands always the figure of Themis."⁴⁵⁶ Harrison's radical reading of not only the Hymn but of the entire effigy of the Greek ideal proposes that the hard, chiseled artifice of Periclean Greece comes at the cost of its religious value—that is to say ritualistic and therefore human value, one derived from the maternal impulses that are collective, undifferentiated, natural, and unifying.

Already the inferences one can make regarding Woolf's own exegesis of Harrison's text for her fiction and nonfiction are multiform and significant—the revision and grounding of the Greek ideal in its matrilineal rather than patrilinear (ergo patriarchal) origin; the search for a collective, common, undifferentiated voice that can animate her fiction and the narration of it like the dithyrambic undulations of the chorus both Woolf and Harrison admired; the kinship with Darwin that brings grandeur to this view of life where time and evolution and gradation might take away the consolation of immutable form but still provide the recompense of wonder and transformation. These are all important, and save the Darwinian aspect well-reviewed by feminist scholars of Woolf and Harrison.

But what makes Harrison's work resonate with Woolf's, less apparently but still profoundly, is how much Harrison's study of antiquity and religious ritual is located in a vitalistic, irrationalistic celebration of the present moment, what Woolf, we must repeat, terms in her own description of a private philosophy as "moments of being." The difference between the Harrison even of *Prolegomena* and the writer concurrently of "The Influence of Darwinism"(1909) and *Themis* (1912) is her eager absorption of Friedrich Nietzsche, Emile Durkheim, William James, and most significantly Henri Bergson. She quotes all of them enthusiastically in both works and then in the ensuing *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913), especially

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Henri Bergson whose *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907) were immediately utilized and applied to her reading of religion and ritual. Harrison is quick to point out, regarding Darwin's influence, that "the very word 'Creator' has nowadays passed into the region of mythology. Instead we have 'L'Evolution Creatrice,'" later on in this essay calling Bergson one of the contemporary "masters." Likewise, Harrison early on and often alludes to Bergson in *Themis*, writing within the first several paragraphs of the Introduction that to France she owes a "debt, indirect but profound, and first and foremost to Professor Henri Bergson":

It is no part of Professor Bergson's present programme, so far as I understand it, to analyse and define the nature and function of religion. But when, four years ago, I first read his L'Evolution Creatrice, I saw dimly at first, but with ever increasing clearness, how deep was the gulf between Dionysos the mystery-god and that Olympos he might never really enter. I knew the reason of my own profound discontent. I saw in a word that Dionysos, with every other mystery-god, was an instinctive attempt to express what Professor Bergson calls *dure'e*, that life which is one, indivisible and yet ceaselessly changing. I saw on the other hand that the Olympians, amid all their atmosphere of romance and all their redeeming vices, were really creations of what Professor William James called 'monarchical deism.' Such deities are not an instinctive expression, but a late and conscious representation, a work of analysis, of reflection and intelligence.⁴⁵⁷

When Harrison added Durkheim's thought that primitive religion in practice, phenomenologically, "reflects collective feeling and collective thinking," she had found her thesis for *Themis*. Bergson's invective against intellectualism, as embodied by Platonism and its contemporary manifestations, is uncritically, panegyrically, holistically applied by Harrison to

⁴⁵⁷ *Themis*, "Introduction," ebook.

her reading, thinking, and writing on the Greeks. The Plato of *Parmenides* and other dialogues who will explicate "that queer thing, the instant" will find its modern expression and rebuttal in Bergson. The insight is revelatory to a scholar who does not believe in revelations: "What we think about Greek religion affects what we think about everything else...I have come to see in the religious impulse a new value. It is, I believe, an attempt, instinctive and unconscious, to do what Professor Bergson bids modern philosophy do consciously and with the whole apparatus of science behind it, namely to apprehend life as one, as indivisible, yet as perennial movement and change."⁴⁵⁸

This common ground found through contemporary philosophy, ironically, opened Harrison up to sharp criticism and even discredited her as a practicing anthropologist⁴⁵⁹. That Harrison is a famous female scholar of antiquity on or about 1910, the most prominent and influential of the *Cambridge* Ritualists, is important to Woolf, regardless. (Roger Fry in 1909, Woolf amusingly notes in her biography of Fry, gave Harrison the supreme compliment of remarking that she had a "truly Apostolic mind.")⁴⁶⁰ But by situating the study of antiquity in the present—not as a literary or artistic form to idealize but as a ritualistic, connected, collective energy with a female force at its center to experience and feel—Harrison gave to Woolf an anthropological model that might very well serve as a literary model. "The only intelligible meaning that ritual has for me, is the keeping open of the individual soul—" Harrison poses, "that bit of the general life which life itself has fenced in by a separate organism—to other souls, other separate lives, and to the apprehension of other forms of life. The avenues are never closed. Life itself, physical and spiritual, is the keeping of them open."⁴⁶¹ It is in the moment, experienced individually and collectively, where ritual and process partakes of the movement and process of

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ See Frank Turner and Martha Carpentier on this.

evolution, that Woolf, following Harrison, will form a very important aspect of her aesthetics of semi-transparency. This temporal open-endedness and shift from religion and culture, as an object of study to phenomenological experience, binds Woolf not just to Harrison but to James, Bergson, and Walter Pater, to whom we turn to next.

* 6.3: PATER'S CREATOR—HERACLITUS AS DARWIN

Walter Pater, an enigmatic figure in life as in Virginia Woolf's work, has nonetheless been labeled, in Perry Meisel's *The Absent Father*, as Woolf's largest literary influence.⁴⁶² This book-length study fully examines the influence of Walter Pater's aesthetic on Virginia Woolf; but we do not need Harold Bloom's anxious Freudian paradigms and Meisel's assertion that Pater is Woolf's unacknowledged literary father to make comparisons or connections. To do so, Meisel must see every aesthetic principle of Woolf's through that gem-like crystallization of Pater's perceptions, downplaying Woolf's numerous acknowledged aesthetic influences. For our purposes, Meisel ignores not only the use Pater makes of Darwin, but also Woolf's reading of Darwin and the Greeks independent of Pater. His sister Clara did teach Woolf Greek (as mentioned in the previous chapter), Woolf owned and read much of his collected works at a young age, and Woolf does write in *Orlando*, among a list of several other authors, that "no one can read or write without being perpetually in the debt of... Walter Pater,"⁴⁶³ a gratitude that makes sense in Woolf's fantastical pseudo-biography of a gender-bending, time-traveling aristocrat. But where Woolf's *Orlando* begins life in the English Renaissance, Pater rarely writes

⁴⁶⁰ Roger Fry: *a Biography*: Virginia Woolf: Complete Works, ebook.

⁴⁶¹ *Themis*, Introduction, ebook.

⁴⁶² *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.

⁴⁶³ "Preface" to *Orlando A Biography*, (New York: HBJ, 1928). See Ch. 1 of *Absent Father* for Meisel's account of Pater's conspicuous absence as a source for Woolf's major aesthetic development, particularly towards an aesthetics of the moment. Harold Bloom agrees with Perry Meisel, not surprising since Meisel uses Blooms *Anxiety of Influence* as the structural scaffolding of his argument.

of figures historically past the Renaissance, more comfortable in the Hellenic past than any other period.⁴⁶⁴

His “Conclusion” to the *Renaissance* (1873), in fact, begins with an epigraph of Plato quoting Socrates quoting Heraclitus, who says “All things are in motion and nothing at rest.”⁴⁶⁵ This is the same epigraph Pater translated in *Plato and Platonism* as “all things give way; Nothing remaineth.”—⁴⁶⁶putting the idea in the starkest terms imaginable. If we remember Pater’s counsel in his “Conclusion,” that “our one chance lies in expanding that interval” of the moment in art and song, we should also remember he sets artistic vision against this “continual vanishing away” of ourselves in time: “Experience dwindles down” impressions to “a single moment, gone while we apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is.”⁴⁶⁷ This “ceased to be” is Heraclitus’s theory of perpetual flux set forth in Pater, and the idea has in an era spanning what we loosely call Modernism its myriad variations and negotiated responses—William James’s “stream of consciousness” and Henri Bergson’s “real duration,” Hardy and Conrad’s “moments of vision,” Joyce’s “epiphany,” and Woolf’s “moments of being,” to name only a few. Rescuing the moment from conventional notions of time becomes the substance of philosophical and literary works, announcing almost ubiquitously a Modern aesthetic, perplexed by an increasingly troubled vision of temporality.⁴⁶⁸

But before giving the age away to Heraclitus, we should also note how Pater makes Heraclitus his contemporary:

⁴⁶⁴ The unfinished *Gaston Latour* and some of the essays in *Appreciations* are the largest exceptions.

⁴⁶⁵ “Heraclitus says ‘All things are in motion and nothing at rest’” Plato’s *Cratylus*, 402A. The “Conclusion” is quoted from *Three Major Texts (The Renaissance, Appreciations, and Imaginary Portraits)*, ed. by William E. Buckler (New York: NYU Press, 1986) 218-219.

⁴⁶⁶ *The Works of Walter Pater in Eight Volumes, VI: Plato and Platonism; A series of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1901) 14.

⁴⁶⁷ “Conclusion,” *Three Major Texts*, 218-220. All future references will be cited in text.

⁴⁶⁸ There are notable exceptions, which this chapter will later draw out.

The theory of perpetual flux was indeed an apprehension of which the full scope was only to be realized by a later age, in alliance with a larger knowledge of the natural world, a closer observation of the phenomena of mind, than was possible, even for Heraclitus, at that early day. So, the seeds of almost all scientific ideas might seem to have been dimly enfolded in the mind of antiquity; but fecundated, admitted to their full working prerogative, one by one, in after ages, by good favour of the special intellectual conditions belonging to a particular generation, which, on a sudden, finds itself preoccupied by a formula, not so much new, as renovated by new application...The entire modern theory of ‘development,’ in all its various phases, proved or unprovable,—what is it but old Heracliteanism awake once more in a new world, and grown to full proportions? (*Plato and Platonism*, 18-19)

How Pater reacts to this modern Heracliteanism—his peculiar rescue of the moment from the flux of time—demonstrates an early and important example of an aesthetic that took the “modern theory of ‘development’” and translated it into an artistic sensibility. The seeds of Heraclitus, Pater argues, embedded underneath Plato’s “fixed ideas,” are only now expressing their full germinating power through this “formula, not so much new, as renovated by new application”: those theories of development that have as their strongest branch Darwin’s theory of evolution.

In his essay on “Style” (1888), Pater explicitly offers his vision of a future literature that will have as its enterprise, “for many years to come [...] the naturalisation of the vocabulary of science, so only it be under the eye of a sensitive scholarship.”⁴⁶⁹ This was certainly one of Pater’s prerogatives, his own assimilation of evolutionary theory. His biographer Michael Levey notes Pater “lived to write coolly, almost uncontroversially, that evidence for the Darwinian

theory [...] was constantly increasing.”⁴⁷⁰ And Billy Andrew Inman has exhaustively researched and cataloged Pater’s readings of and about evolutionary theory (among other things) that came to inform his writing the *Renaissance* “Conclusion,” including Darwin, Herbert Spencer, George Henry Lewes, and Thomas Huxley.⁴⁷¹

Pater’s most explicit elucidation of evolutionary thought is in *Plato and Platonism* (1893). In that work, Pater continually evokes Darwin’s theory as a contemporary context from which to view the historical sensibility that Plato inherited from his philosophical predecessors, a useful scope of the present from which to view the past. Inman muses that Pater’s reading of Plato must have been an awakening experience. “Here, in this ancient text, he found concepts that he had thought to be modern: such as, relativity, the perpetual flux, and the subjectivity of knowledge.”⁴⁷² Plato’s dialogues had at each bend damned the currents of philosophical thought that argued perpetual change and the indeterminacy of knowledge, but the stronger, more current counterarguments once again overflowed Platonism’s banks through Darwin’s massive wake. The revelation in Pater’s chapter on “Plato and the Doctrine of Motion” is that Plato’s types or ideal forms are established against Heraclitean flux, and after twenty-three centuries of stony sleep, “Darwin and Darwinism” answers back “‘type’ itself properly *is* not but is only always *becoming*.”⁴⁷³ The “long argument” of *The Origin of Species*, which early on announces Darwin’s claim “that species are not immutable,”⁴⁷⁴ arranges about it example after example of the slippage between organic forms, if perceived through time, so that type indeed opens up to a transitional and continuous becoming. Only always *becoming* because evolution, if understood through Darwin’s lapses of geological time and the slow, graduating steps of natural selection,

⁴⁶⁹ *Three Major Texts (Appreciations)*, 399.

⁴⁷⁰ “Introduction” to *Marius the Epicurean* (London: Penguin, 1985) 10.

⁴⁷¹ *The Intellectual Context of Walter Pater’s “Conclusion”* from *Prose Studies*, vol. 4 (May 1981): Frank Cass and Co.

⁴⁷² *Walter Pater*, ed. with and introduction by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1985) 139.

⁴⁷³ Emphasis Pater’s, *Plato and Platonism*, 18. Hereafter to be cited in text as *PP*.

“implies,” in Darwin’s words, “the continual supplanting and extinction of preceding and intermediate gradations” (*OS*, 166). So Pater comments that “the eye and the sun it lives by reveal themselves, after all, as Heraclitus had declared (scarcely serious, he seemed to those around him) as literally in constant extinction and renewal.” A few passages later we read “the Darwinian theory—that ‘species,’ the identifying forms of animal and vegetable life, immutable though they seem now, as of old in the Garden of Eden, are fashioned by slow development, while perhaps millions of years go by: well! every month is adding to its evidence” (20). Hence, Pater transforms a few allusive fragments of Heraclitus into a Darwinian figure of “full proportions.”

Such investment crucially reveals how Darwin’s descent leads Pater, and then Woolf, among so many contemporaries and heirs, to believe we are not assured the hard outline of final form in either life or art. Especially malleable becomes the human form, now not divine though by adaptive necessity always refining and refining. How differently Pater’s most regarded passage on *La Gioconda* reads, his own “symbol of the modern idea” an aesthetic of evolutionary characteristics.⁴⁷⁵ To break Pater’s Lady Lisa up rudely to foreground the point, she is: “older than the rocks among which she sits.”; “expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire”; “the deposit, little cell by little cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions”; “all the thoughts and experience of the world...in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form”⁴⁷⁶ Pater’s hyperbolic language, at first simply setting her for a moment beside Greek statuary, passes her through time with increasing intensity and extension, “dead many times, [...] a diver in deep seas,” until Pater brings her to modern philosophy’s conception of “humanity as wrought upon

⁴⁷⁴ *On the Origin of Species*, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Gillian Beer. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.

⁴⁷⁵ “Leonardo da Vinci,” *Three Major Texts (The Renaissance)* 150.

by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life, ” that idea of perpetual motion, we are reminded, “an old one.”⁴⁷⁷ Those “changing lineaments” of her form, which so inspired Yeats when he read Pater’s prose, embody the dynamics through which Pater writes, again and again, the moment’s impression down even as it becomes, adds to, disappears into the past.

Woolf does not have her one emblematic Mona Lisa; she has many *La Giocandas* in regard to the passage of time, but they are not mute, and Woolf concerns herself much less with the ways that men had come to desire them. They are, in Woolf, the person to whom things happen. They may be framed, as Mrs. Ramsay is in her window, and the amateur post-impressionist Lily Briscoe might draw her as a triangle in *To the Lighthouse*, but it is where the lines blur and intersect between a Mrs. Ramsay and the other characters that most draw Woolf’s attention. Outlines soften to the mutability of form, and the hard lines in Woolf are often drawn in a sand saturated with Darwin. Among the “leaden circles that dissolve,” or the “unsubstantiated territories” and the “cracked sealing matter,” the numerous images and metaphors in Woolf that might testify to mutability through time, the most well-worn image concerning Woolf’s aesthetic should also be seen in this light: Woolf asks if it is not the “chief task of the novelist” to convey “the incessant shower of innumerable atoms” pressed upon the mind, what Woolf calls “life itself,” and figures as “the semi-transparent envelope, or luminous halo, surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.”⁴⁷⁸ Woolf leaves her circles permeable, the matter of what passes through one mind to and from an external world, to and from consciousness, never fully circumscribed. Or, in Pater’s words, worth phrasing alongside Woolf in her Darwinian tenor: “That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid

out beyond it. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.”⁴⁷⁹

Pater’s “moment” in art becomes significant to Woolf and other Modernists not simply because life is significantly short, but also because time under Darwin’s tutelage is now expanded to inconceivable lengths. Darwinism creates of the present a transitory state in the Modernist aesthetic. Pater will spend it “getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time.”⁴⁸⁰ Woolf will too, but with crucial differences.

* 6.4: “ALREADY THE PAST”—MOMENTS LOST IN DARWIN’S ALMOST ETERNITY

That Darwin replaces the idea of eternity with nearly as vast a stretch of time did not relieve the burden of those after him who did their own grappling with time. To use *To the Lighthouse* once again, Woolf has Mrs. Ramsay derive that satisfaction as she looks triumphantly over her successful dinner party: “It partook, she felt...of eternity...Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures” (105). But what feels permanent in Woolf grows all the more susceptible to time, as Mrs. Ramsay stands on the threshold of this moment “in a scene which was vanishing even as she looked...; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past” (111). A crucial component in Woolf’s moments are their very transience, the privilege that is so soon taken away, the present that is already becoming the past as soon as it comes to being, indeed already written by the narrator in the past tense.

A similar issue in Pater is this yearning towards the “privileged moment” that might be satisfied in the present. His reverie over the Mona Lisa derives that satisfaction, as does Marius

⁴⁷⁸ *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III*, p. 33.

⁴⁷⁹ “Conclusion,” *Three Major Texts*, 217-218.

the Epicurean when an unexpected delay in travel prolonged the moment, the scene before him and within him becoming a “still turning to reverie”:

And might not the intellectual frame also [...] be a moment only, an impulse or series of impulses, a single process, in an intellectual or spiritual system external to it, diffused through all time and place—that great stream of spiritual energy, of which his own imperfect thoughts, yesterday or to-day, would be but the remote, and therefore imperfect pulsations? [...] It was easier to conceive of the material fabric of things as but an element in a world of thought—as a thought in a mind, than of mind as an element, or accident, or passing condition in a world of matter [...] How he had longed, sometimes, that there were indeed one to whose boundless power of memory he could commit his own most fortunate moments...⁴⁸¹

In Pater’s transformed admixture of fiction and non-fiction, Marius begins to renounce both Heraclitus and Darwin in favor of the Christian ideal, to which Marius will commit his most fortunate moments as well as his “burthens.” As if Marius were weary of evolutionary theory without being privy to its “evidence,” Pater leads him through various and competing hypotheses that suggest “one’s own actual ignorance of the origin and tendency of our being,” to finally let him rest “easier” in the feeling that there are certain beliefs and principles “one could not do without.” One of Marius’s most serviceable philosophical lessons is that if one has the will to believe, if “‘tis in thy power to think as thou wilt,” then “Might the will itself be an organ of knowledge, of vision?” (208-9). Christian belief becomes a system of knowledge, something akin to a Platonic form. These the passages from the same writer of the *Renaissance* who

⁴⁸⁰ *Renaissance* “Conclusion,” *TMT*, 220.

omitted his “Conclusion” from the second edition for fear “it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall,” directing his third edition readers to *Marius the Epicurean*, where he had “dealt more fully” with “the thoughts suggested by it.”⁴⁸²

In this context, Pater’s lessons in *Marius* also becomes serviceable to reading the tendencies of writers post-Darwin who bargained between the acceptance of evolutionary theory and a morality founded upon beliefs and principles that were increasingly susceptible to the same processes of mutability. Such fundamental inclusion of Darwinian theory into any aesthetic of the moment underlies the dilemma of aesthetic bases on the moral assumptions and dogmas that evolutionary theory in large part subverted. In many responses, intimations of eternity and its personal manifestation of immortality were often refashioned with a few necessary alterations into the capacious vestments of an eternal now. The idea of eternity is, of course, a metaphysical assumption not only to logic, but also to creation; and the Cartesian logic that could give us an argument from design of a sudden lost its designer and the comfort of a rational creator. Natural theology buckled on its Enlightenment foundations when reason became the byproduct, not the producer, of nature. Freud famously asserts that the universal narcissism of mankind had suffered its second great blow when Darwin and his supporters showed that man biologically was not separate from other animals in the organic scheme of evolution; but less emphasized is its correspondent shock to morality.⁴⁸³ Margot Norris argues in *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* that when evolutionary theory initiated the collapse of the cardinal distinctions between animals and humans, the intellectual, cultural, and moral distinctions became matters, as

⁴⁸¹ “The Will as Vision,” *Marius the Epicurean*, ed. with introduction and notes by Michael Levey (London: Penguin, 1985) 210-13. Future references will be cited in text as *ME*.

⁴⁸² from Pater’s footnote to the third edition *Renaissance* “Conclusion.”

⁴⁸³ Paraphrased from “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis (1917),” *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. James Strachey (London, 1956): 17:140-41. The third blow, in narcissistic fashion, was of course his own theories of psycho-analysis.

Darwin memorably states it in *The Descent of Man*, “of degree, not of kind”.⁴⁸⁴ Darwin’s revolution, though, was as much Copernican or even Einsteinian as it was Darwinian. The realm of the eternal, safeguarded in the house of logic and mathematics, had also become susceptible to natural ruin and decay. What permeates the philosophical thinking after Darwin, and what clouds the temporal atmosphere of fiction as well, is a natural world still available to moments of comfort, even to romance, but those spots of time now have a correspondent shock of time that leaves a more pronounced feeling of inconsequence. For Pater in temperament, and for Woolf especially, the moment is not in the hands of a creator, much less the creator of a moral universe.

* 6.5: DISCIPLINING THE MOMENT

It was Pater’s misfortune to have articulated in the “Conclusion” a passionate and eloquent appeal to “the love of art for its own sake” without so much as a nod to morality and conscience, not because such a position might be wholly insupportable, but because it shook the already unsteadied morals of those who could cause him professional harm. If his inclusion of the “decadent” French theorists of art for art’s sake was enough to brand him an immoralist, the exclusion of the prerequisite Christian tradition of Oxford would be enough to cost him a sure appointment to a university proctorship.⁴⁸⁵ After *The Renaissance*, “Pater’s name was suspect for more than a decade,” writes Lawrence Evans, “and the hostility of powerful elements in the University made itself strongly felt.”⁴⁸⁶ Even Woolf’s father, an agnostic who fell into disbelief after reading Darwin, vilifies this position of the “indolent Epicurean” in his essay “Art and Morality” (1875), which suppresses Pater’s name but leaves little doubt who should first receive

⁴⁸⁴ Paraphrased from her introductory chapter arguments, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1985).

⁴⁸⁵ I gloss the story of Pater’s professional travails after *The Renaissance*, as there has not been a lengthy discussion of the “Conclusion” I’ve come across that doesn’t retell it. Perry Meisel’s chapter “Relations” in *The Absent Father* is as good an account as any.

⁴⁸⁶ *Letters of Walter Pater*, ed. by Lawrence Evans (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1970) xxi.

the critic's "lash with the full strength of his arm. The harder he hits and the deeper he cuts, the better for the world."⁴⁸⁷ For those who found Pater dangerous, or even "poisonous," to quote George Eliot's letter to *Blackwood's Magazine*,⁴⁸⁸ this was the proper critical reaction. Any reading of the biography of Pater and the contemporary reviews of *The Renaissance* lead one to suspect that Marius's conversion to Christianity has as much of this inquisitorial history behind it as it did Pater's fictional representation of a Christian era being born among its martyrs to the Roman Empire.

But if the critical and professional backlash against Pater explains the impetus behind certain inclusions in his later work, it does not explain away the ideas behind Pater's twinborn expansion of the "Conclusion" in the fictional form of *Marius* and the historical form of *Plato and Platonism*. Pater, Hellenist that he was, certainly meant for his "Conclusion"'s footnote to allude to Plato's account of Socrates's martyrdom, the charge of misleading youth a bitter draught that Pater too had tasted, though not fatally. *Plato and Platonism* shares this kinship with *Marius*, its sense of a more mature conclusion to his preliminary "Conclusion." Socrates—in Aristotle and Pater alike—is credited with the formation of "universal ideas" that stabilize the flux of sensations and time registered in the Heraclitus of *Plato and Platonism*. It is a strange transformation to notice in Pater, nowhere more peculiarly than in his parable of the "layman" and the "naturalist" collecting seashells along the shore, relayed as an introduction to the impact of Socratic thought. The layman

is in fact still but a child; and the shell, its colours and convolution, no more than a dainty, very easily destructible toy to him. Let him become a schoolboy about it, so to speak. The toy he puts aside; his mind is drilled perforce, to learn *about*

⁴⁸⁷ *Cornhill* 32 (July 1875): 91-101. Perry Meisel argues persuasively that Pater is the source and inspiration for Stephen's essay. See *Absent Father*, 1-7.

it; and thereby is exercised, he may think, with everything except just the thing itself, as he cares for it; with other shells, with some general laws of life [...]. (*PP*, 157-8)

By stern discipline of study, the necessary ascetic of aesthetics that Pater defines often as *acsêsis*, the mental drilling and exercise informs the man the schoolboy has become; and with the general ideas learned, the particular shell might be held in the hand once again by “a kind of short-hand now, and as if in a single moment of vision, all that, which only a long experience, moving patiently from part to part, could exhaust, its manifold alliance with the entire world of nature” (158). Compare this to the Pater who writes in “Conclusion” that “not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end,” or that “our failure is to form habits” of attention, and we can detect the marked differences.

Meisel notes that in Pater’s work “there is no sphere of existence that cannot be viewed through, and elucidated by, the interrelated figures of fusion and *ascesis*, denoting as they do the necessary preconditions for the production of perfect work in art and life alike” (*AF*, 59). What Pater’s figures further suggest, however, is not merely this structural consistency of *ascesis* and fusion present in all his work, but the process of growth or development that Pater’s figures are meant to convey. The “moment of vision” does coalesce into crystal, that “hard, gem-like flame,” but what Pater emphasizes is the process itself that the refined product of “Platonic aesthetics” comes to exemplify. This, we may surmise, is why Pater includes “carbon” in his allusion to Platonic doctrine, which through long process evolves from the material “charcoal” and turns into “diamond,” just as the “naturalist” has derived from his shell a “moment of vision” that has behind it the rough materials of childhood enthusiasms (*PP*, 160-162).

⁴⁸⁸ *The Letters of George Eliot*, V. Ed. Gordon S. Haight, (New Haven, 1955) 455.

* 6.6: THE DISCIPLINED MOMENT AND THE PROCESSION OF PLATONIC FORM

Indeed, the entire historical sensibility and structural emphasis of *Plato and Platonism* may be considered figuratively as an enlargement of this process of carbon in the hands of the naturalist, “when it has come to include both charcoal and the diamond” (162). This historic method, Pater’s critical preference, “bids us replace the [preconceived] doctrine, or the system, we are busy with” and see a work or a philosophy “in the group of conditions, intellectual, social, material, amid which it was actually produced, if we would really understand it” (8-9). By cultivating this “historic sense,” an underestimated characteristic of Pater’s work as a whole, a figure like Plato may be seen as “mental process” in the same way a product of “the organic world” may be determined by its “environment”. As he further states: “To put Plato into his natural place, as a result from antecedent and contemporary movements of Greek speculation, of Greek life generally: such is the proper aim of the historic, that is to say, of the really critical study of him” (10-11). Given that Pater, largely perhaps due to Yeats’s “The Tragic Generation,” is often described pejoratively as an aesthete, as was Virginia Woolf in whose company she often found herself. Though Pater is one of the authors most championed by Harold Bloom in preference to his “Schools of Resentment,” it is enlightening to see this principle of criticism carried on by Frederic Jameson and Stephen Greenblatt. They, too, follow his dictum to “always historicize.”⁴⁸⁹

There is even in Pater an original sense of the political unconscious and the New Historicist tendency to utilize the rarer texts as a means of expanding corroboration. By assessing Plato against his philosophical precursors— Heraclitus, the Eleatic school, and Pythagorus, (not to mention “the unconscious social aggregate” of Egypt, Syria, Scythia)—the political upheaval and mutability of Empire and thought in Greek life comes into critical

existence, whereby Pater derives from these few fragmentary texts and allusions a sketch of a society in turmoil and transformation that Plato shocks into stability. Plato's ideals create a future *Republic*, for instance, by imagining an alternative utopia to the actual conditions in which he lived. Plato will come to believe in the fixed forms, the universal principles exhibited in convivial Socratic dialogue, by necessity in an age of "intellectual chaos" and "insubordinate youth" that the spirit of Heraclitus's doctrine exemplified (*PP*, 14). Pater reminds us of Plato's own figure from *Cratylus*, where the intellect uses "general law" so that Heraclitus's "fluid matter may be retained in vessels, not indeed of unbaked clay, but of alabaster or bronze" (159). Plato's doctrine of rest, everywhere present in his dialogues, prominently in *Parmenides* and *Cratylus*, set against the doctrine of Heraclitean motion, insists on a kind of order that Greek society might develop into an ideal state, if only approximately. This is the Plato who was born after the imminent threat of the Persian Empire against Athens, only to live through the incessant civil wars between Greek empires, most notably the belligerent oligarchy of Sparta and the sometimes-corrupt democracy of Athens, whose citizens voted to execute Socrates. Motion, even the motion of words, implies instability of statehood as well as of thought.

In an argument that anticipates Mikhail Bakhtin, Pater reads into "the centrifugal tendency" of Greek thought before the "centripetal" force of Platonic cohesion. The "fitness," yes, the *ascêsis* of Plato's "intellectual gymnastics," will conduct Plato to his great insight, his ultimate concept of universals, "the one and the many," partly from the "queer thing, the instant":

Parmenides: And does this strange thing in which it is at the time of changing really exist?

⁴⁸⁹ From the first lines of Frederic Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*.

Aristoteles: What thing?

Parmenides: The moment. For the moment seems to imply a something out of which change takes place, into either of two states; for the change is not from the state of rest as such, nor from the state of motion as such; but there is this curious nature which we call the moment lying between rest and motion, not being in any time [...].

Therefore if one is, the one is all things, and also nothing, both in relation to itself and to other things.⁴⁹⁰

Parmenides does not, in the end, render a way out of the paradox of the “one and the many,” so much as it presents ways of thinking about it. Plato gives as example the moment, a thing lying between rest and motion, and therefore universal (“the one is all things”) and nothing (“not being in any time”). While Meisel wants the moment in Woolf to be primarily Pater’s, Brenda Lyons astutely observes how Perry Meisel overlooks Platonism as the strongest link between both Pater’s formal considerations and Woolf’s, depriving Woolf of her primary readings of the Greeks.⁴⁹¹ Pater’s crystallized moments receive all the critical attention, but the greatest connection to the authors who share his emphasis upon the moment is perhaps not simply the gem-like flame of Pater’s aesthetic ends, but the long accumulation of the past that it comes to include. In Pater’s discussion of “The Doctrine of Plato,” for example, Plato’s abstraction of thought is not of importance: “[...] even of abstract truths it is not so much what he thinks as the person who is thinking, that after all really tells” (155). The thinking person partakes of Pater’s historic process, informed by the encounter with the grander ideas, and the “great literary monument” that is Plato can be said, like Pater says of “Political constitutions,” to be a thing we see “grow” into what it makes (11, 21).

⁴⁹⁰ *Parmenides, The Works of Plato, IV*. Trans. B. Jowett. Ed. Irwin Edman. (New York: Random House, 1956) 90-93.

⁴⁹¹ *Textual Voyages; Platonic Allusions in Virginia Woolf’s Fiction*, 74-75. This, as previously mentioned, should also include Woolf’s primary reading of Darwin, a reading Meisel ignores in both Woolf and Pater.

Pater's heroes, then, his fictional Marius and his historic Plato, are studies of the stability of ideas enacted against a perpetual flux that continually undercuts the will to "rest easier" or think wholly, even as the process informs who they become and what they come to represent: the achievement of experience or knowledge so wholly transforming that it cuts into time. There is the aesthetic that finds a sensibility conducive to their respective temperaments in a time of instability, which in Pater is synonymous with what he came to see as the instability of time itself. But it must be said, as much as Plato is treated as an intellectual hero, or *Marius the Epicurean* lends itself to a reading of self-studied heroism, they do not, in principle, share Pater's temperament. We might better read them as antithetical creations of Pater in the manner of the later Yeats's anti-self, and see Heraclitus—cum Darwin—the stronger identity. For in both works, Heraclitus rises like the dark angel or prophet of a Darwinian age, the greater force and unwitting hero that Pater's Romantic forebears saw in the Satan of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. A reader of Pater never quite loses the greater rhythm of his thought as something passing, the moment indeterminate, the conclusion that "we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more" (*TMT*, 220).

* 6.7: THE USES AND DISADVANTAGES OF PREHISTORY IN NARRATIVE

Pater's aesthetics and the historical procession of his Hellenism should be set in contrast to the evolutionary divergences of his contemporaries in philosophy who also broke free from Victorian notions of the Greek ideal. One way of seeing the convergence of Darwin and historical process is to assess Darwin's continuing importance when other evolutionary theories and their offshoots became obsolete. Of course, Darwin's evolutionary theory was not the only one competing for attention and acceptance; as the "developmental theory," "transformisme," or

“transmutation,” it had many names but was “among the commonest of nineteenth-century heresies.”⁴⁹² The most often cited—J. B. Lamarck’s *Zoological Philosophy* (1809) and Herbert Spencer’s emergent principles of evolution—⁴⁹³ were just two of the more prevalent and influential among many that set out to argue for the mutability of species before Darwin’s *Origin*. Darwin’s uniqueness begins with observational abundance, his profusion of examples for the minute varieties of transformation among species that make a case though overwhelming evidence. Both the geologist Charles Lyell and Darwin find Lamarck’s theory untenable due to its lack of methodology: Lyell writes, “There were no examples to be found” in Lamarck’s theoretical progression up the “ladder of life” to ever more complex species.⁴⁹⁴ Lamarck’s most famous example of the “laws of nature” is the adult giraffe whose neck incrementally lengthens in a single life span by virtue of will or intent so that it might reach the higher tree. Thus, habitual intention may be “preserved by reproduction to the new individuals which arise”⁴⁹⁵ Lamarck’s theory has the charm of fable about it but no methodology from which to test the hypothesis: the transformations are invisible. In the same manner, Spencer’s reading of upward progress in evolution, from “amoeba to human, from savage to *Homo britannicus*,”⁴⁹⁶ ends in the final achievement of “impassible limit,” a state of “equilibration” that not only places civilized humanity in a comfortably familiar and Lamarckian position—the top—but also gives us the moral comfort that “The ultimate development of the ideal man is logically certain [...] Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity.”⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹² Stephen Jay Gould, “Evolution and the Triumph of Homology, or Why History Matters,” *American Scientist*, Vol. 74, Jan-Feb., 1986, 60-69, p. 60.

⁴⁹³ While much of Spencer’s ‘synthetic’ philosophy came after *Origin*, some key works did not. For instance, *Social Statics* (1851) and *Principles of Psychology* (1855).

⁴⁹⁴ *Principles of Geology*, 6th ed. 3 vols., (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1842) 10-11.

⁴⁹⁵ “*Zoological Philosophy*,” *Darwin*, ed. by Philip Appleman (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001) 49.

⁴⁹⁶ the phrase is from Michael Ruse and Edward O. Wilson’s “The Evolution of Ethics,” *Darwin*, 507.

⁴⁹⁷ From Spencer’s *Social Statics*, qtd. In “The Vogue of Spencer,” Richard Hofstadter, *Darwin*, 391-392.

Lamarck and Spencer use scientific hypothesis (however obsolete) for the reading of history, but their failure is not simply an arriving at a faulty hypothesis: they fail to see history as a part of scientific inquiry, what Edward H. Carr succinctly takes as “the real importance of Darwinian revolution. Darwin, completing what Lyell had already begun, brought history into science.”⁴⁹⁸ That is, Darwin brought time to bear on the study of science and the relations of species in the same manner that the processes of history, analyzed through time, bear upon the study of past cultures and their relations to each other. By doing so, the history of civilization becomes a mere moment of time when conceived in light of a natural history of life, not only bringing history to science but prehistory to traditional history. His methodology must work with the “lapses of years” in the historical record of fossils and the present homology evident in the links between species. “The historical process, in other words, becomes the thread that ties all results together causally,” writes Gould.⁴⁹⁹ This thread forms the historical narrative of the *Origin*, the story Darwin tells.

Darwin’s modest attribution to his achievement, that half his work came out of his friend and mentor Charles Lyell’s brain, does merit attention, as Woolf’s proclivity to “tunnel” her way into the past shares the same methodology that Darwin attributes to Lyell. It is not simply a matter of biographical coincidence that Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) was one of the few texts that Darwin took on his voyage of *The HMS Beagle*. Lyell’s insistent premise in *Principles of Geology*, to quote Gould again, “—that a historical scientist must work with observable, gradual, small-scale changes and extrapolate their effects through immense time to encompass the grand phenomena of history—won Darwin’s allegiance, with a central

⁴⁹⁸ *What is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1961) 71.

⁴⁹⁹ “Evolution and the Triumph of Homology,” 63.

commitment for its transfer, in toto, to biological realms.”⁵⁰⁰ This is Lyell’s methodology of uniformitarianism, sometimes deemed gradualism, which insists upon studying the small, observable changes in the present, such as soil erosion or the fossil record, in order to understand the same processes occurring over a vast time-scale. Geological and then evolutionary changes continue in the present, though the changes are so slow, so gradual, that they require the widest imaginable latitude of vision. Lyell himself marks this necessary vantage of geological time by musing over an historical event, usually measured by a hundred years of “romance time,” glanced at with two thousand years of “historical time”:

Such a portion of history would immediately assume the air of romance; the events would seem devoid of credibility, and inconsistent with the present course of human affairs. A crowd of incidents would follow each other in thick succession. Armies and fleets would appear to be assembled only to be destroyed, and cities built merely to fall into ruins.⁵⁰¹

But by applying Lyell’s geological time scale to evolutionary theory, Darwin treats humanity to the same historical processes of time as continental drift or the simplest organism, an application so devoid of romance that even Lyell only gradually accepted its import. These sensibilities of the past, the romantic and the geological, compete and even coincide in the fictional writers who push furthest into the metaphors of time. Certainly Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, and Virginia Woolf find this convergence, even this incongruity, worthy of their fictional attention. Given this sense of historical process, we can understand why Lamarck and Spencer’s versions still continually reappear as the more popularly accepted and misread conceptions of evolution, as they were immediately after *The Origin*: “Faced with so absent a beginning and so bleak and

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, 61

⁵⁰¹ *Principles of Geology*, 78-79 and taken here in the context discussed in Gillian Beer’s *Darwin’s Plots*, 5.

prodigious an extension of time it is not surprising that many of Darwin's first readers favoured the counter-form of evolutionary myth: that of growth, ascent, and development towards complexity" (*DP*, 119-120). Spencer's evolution, which took much of Lamarck as its basis, was at least as accepted as Darwin's late into the 1880s, in America much longer after that.⁵⁰²

The advantage to believing in a Spencer or a Lamarck derives from historical process becoming evolutionary progress, and the great relief of progress lies in an assured direction to this development. It assures the past, too, gives the past its air of romance, and Woolf, like Hardy and Conrad before her, reads into this "hereditary game" an almost willful ignorance of evolutionary implications. In an early 1908 review of Continental writers upon the English character, Woolf pays particular attention to the ancestor worship that goes into the formation of "the true English word—'Gentleman'. Centuries have gone to produce this excellent specimen, endowing him finally with an atmosphere almost of romance."⁵⁰³ Like a finch isolated on one of the Galapagos islands, the English point of view, evidenced in their art and literature, almost seems another species of thought, immune to the incursions of foreign ideas and aesthetics. Woolf writes, "While Tolstoy, Ibsen, and Nietzsche sent waves of fresh thought across the Continent, the English slept undisturbed or did not raise their eyes from their own affairs" (203). This is written before James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, or Virginia Woolf herself has entered the English aesthetic consciousness, but Woolf plays with some of the ideas slowly disturbing English sentiment towards the past and future.

*6.8: NIETZSCHE'S UNTIMELY INTERRUPTION OF THE PROCESSION

⁵⁰² See Richard Hofstadter's "The Vogue of Spencer," *Darwin*, 389-395.

⁵⁰³ "A Stranger in London," *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie, (New York, HBJ, 1986), p. 203.

No philosopher was more concerned with the future of his backward glances than Friedrich Nietzsche. “In any case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity,” writes Goethe, which Friedrich Nietzsche uses as his introduction to “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History” (1873), his second contribution to *Untimely Meditations*.⁵⁰⁴ As a contemporaneous piece to the “Conclusion” of Pater, Nietzsche’s strong, uproarious invective against the “pupil of Heraclitus” serves as an invigorating counterpoint when placed in dialogue with Pater, evolution, and historical process. Inveighing against what Nietzsche views as the “striking symptoms of our age” that indicate a “consuming fever of history,” he prescribes us “to serve history only to the extent that history serves life” (*UT*, 59-60). A classicist, especially of the Hellenic, Nietzsche still thinks historical process needs an injection of the untimely. “For I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time, and let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come” (60). Nietzsche emphasizes that such a history acting on our time should benefit the future, but not in the *zeitgeist* of the Hegelian who would have our belated but fully conscious awareness of the “world process” a realization that equates “his miserable condition” to “the completion of world-history” (104).

The full force of Nietzsche’s irony comes in the final consummation of an historical man who would totally surrender personality to this world process under the guidance of evolution:

Heirs of the Greeks and Romans? Of Christianity? To these cynics that seems nothing; but heirs of the world-process! Summit and target of the world-process! Meaning and solution of all the riddles of evolution come to light in modern man,

⁵⁰⁴ *Untimely Meditations*, trans. By R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1997) 59-123. Future references will be cited as *UT*.

the ripest fruit of the tree of knowledge!—that I call an ecstatic feeling of pride [...]. Contemplation of history has never flown so far, not even in dreams; for now the history of mankind is only the continuation of the history of animals and plants; even in the profoundest depths of the sea the universal historian still finds traces of himself as living slime [...]. He stands high and proud upon the pyramid of the world-process; as he lays the keystone of his knowledge at the top of it he seems to call out to nature all around him; ‘We have reached the goal, we are the goal, we are nature perfected.’ (107-8)

Nietzsche has Von Hartman’s *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869) in his ironic crosshairs, its attempts to unify Schopenhauer’s unconscious will with a social ideal that has Hegel’s eternal mind as its result. Nietzsche thinks it so absurd, so unwittingly ironic a position to surrender yourself to “world-process” for “world-redemption,” that he champions Von Hartmann as the parodist par excellence of world-history. But it serves equally well for any evolutionary application that sees *homo sapiens* as the summit of evolution—for Nietzsche grants us the full impact of evolutionary theory, that every branch of species it climbs is also a descent into chaos: “the ground sinks away from you into the unknown; there is no longer any support for your life, only spider’s threads which every new grasp of knowledge tears apart” (108). Pater’s sense of Darwinism as an “only always becoming” finds a new context in Nietzsche’s axe sharpened for a felling of evolution’s newly planted tree of knowledge and life. Almost, as it were, aping Pater’s words, “a continual evolving that flows ceaselessly away” becomes the joke on becoming: “whoever is not enlightened by it as to the nature of *becoming*, not inwardly cleared out and set in order, indeed, in regard to that matter, is truly ripe and ready for becoming a has-been” (108).

The substance of Nietzsche's parody of the position, however, does not concern the verity of evolution but the use of it as instruction; "becoming, fluidity of all concepts, types and species, of the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal," Nietzsche considers "true but deadly" (112). Such instruction in progress carries in it Nietzsche's all too fulfilling prophecy that another generation of it would lead to systems of "individualist egoism, brotherhoods for the rapacious exploitation of the non-brothers." Nietzsche's concern is to give history a future, to transform the truth that being human is "only an uninterrupted has-been" into a being capable of acting *unhistorically*, to feel an animal happiness in the ability to forget. His famous dictum that "forgetting is essential to action of any kind" counters those "thus condemned to see everywhere a state of becoming," no longer believing in themselves and lost in this stream of flux "like a true pupil of Heraclitus," incapable of raising one finger against the *historical sense* (62). The healthy "historical men," if they are not the rare *suprahistorical* souls of near omniscience, balance their forgetting with what amounts to the same thing: a preoccupation with history that offers the beneficial illusion that history stands only in the service of their life.

***6.9: NIETZSCHE AND PATER—BECOMING ZARATHUSTRAN OR HERACLITEAN**

In this, we discover the uncanny and seemingly outrageous concurrence of thought in Pater and Nietzsche. Not only does the becoming of Heraclitus find its recurrence in Darwinian evolution, but also Nietzsche's untimely creed to act "unhistorically" has as its aesthetic kin the moment made "whole" in Pater. For Nietzsche's introduction of the unhistorical sensibility, which has us enviously view the grazing cattle, is not fortuitous coincidence when the argument later picks up the process of evolution. "The animal lives *unhistorically*: for it is contained in the

present, like a number without any awkward fraction left over; it [...] at every instant appears wholly as what it is; it can never be anything but honest” (60-61). Our human state of existence, fundamentally “an imperfect tense,” is the existence Pater wishes to counter with the moment in art and life that, in Nietzsche’s words, exists as a matter of wonder in the envious man who looks with cursed remembrance upon the cows “for whom every moment really dies” (ibid).

Here, the confluence of ideas parts ways, for Pater’s victory of the moment over the flux of time remains partial. Nietzsche’s does not, because his is a philosophy that finds the momentary joy an insufficient creed: “The smallest happiness, if only it is present uninterruptedly and makes happy, is incomparably more happiness than the greatest happiness that comes only as an episode, as it were a piece of waywardness or folly, in a continuum of joylessness, desire and privation” (61-62). Pater’s present moment, the need to prolong it but the inability to sustain it, has a smaller claim on the future in comparison, and the gay science of Nietzsche will not stand for partial victories.

By the writing of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1892), Nietzsche had transformed this moment and its Darwinian “only always becoming” into the capitalized “Moment” of eternal return. Zarathustra tells the parable of the two eternal paths that meet at a gateway inscribed with “Moment”:

“Behold...this moment! From this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads *backward*; behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before?...And are not all things knotted together so firmly

that this moment draws after it *all* that is to come?... –must we not eternally return?”⁵⁰⁵

Plato’s moment in *Parmenides*, his “queer thing, the instant,” exists paradoxically outside of time and in it, whereas Nietzsche’s moment partakes of time and history, but this endless process of becoming is trumped by the eternal return of the moment. Zarathustra, “the teacher of eternal recurrence” (220), must teach that “becoming” is cyclical, recurs eternally again and again: “—not to a new life or a better life or a similar life: I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life...to proclaim the overman again to men” (221). Much has been made of Nietzsche’s belief in “eternal recurrence,” most of it overly defensive or quickly dismissive, but the gist of it remains constant in Nietzsche. If history is to have any value, if becoming is to have moral value greater than the “true but deadly” teachings of evolution, the future must be seen as possible ascent as well as descent. It is foolish to believe in a better or a new life in evolutionary terms, but it might not be foolish to will oneself to betterment in this “selfsame” life if one believes it is the only life. This said, Nietzsche creates a future where history is in the service of life, and evolutionary truths are simply a given. Pater’s view of life as always becoming is Nietzsche’s possibly becoming what you will.

***6.10: NIETZSCHE’S DIONYSIS AND THE ANTI-SOCRATIC TRAGIC**

Thus, we come to understand why the later Yeats turns to Nietzsche and not Pater for the sense that amid the procession of time, even the tragic vision of history can bring joy into action. In the same manner, the Dionysian ecstasy in *The Birth of Tragedy* was not to be an episode, just as Nietzschean joy was not Pater’s chastened flame. But there is, in a larger sense, some agreement between Pater and the earlier Nietzsche in their readings of Socrates and Plato as a

⁵⁰⁵ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra; A Book for None and All*, trans. By Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 157-60.

stabilizing reaction to the Greek temper that had, in its early drama as in its pre-Socratic philosophy, an exuberant, if destructive, life force. To rehash briefly Nietzsche's famous fusion of the Dionysian and the Apollinian: the Dionysian is the aesthetic condition that originates the pure strains of music and its intoxicating release of the "wilder emotions," the Apollinian light reigns over the plastic arts. Their reconciliation delivers Nietzsche's "birth of tragedy," when the primordial spirit of Dionysus, in its agony or ecstasy, is touched by the laurels of Apollo, which deliver the emotions over to the contemplative powers of the image and the lyre: "We must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus which ever anew discharges itself in an Apollinian world of images."⁵⁰⁶ While the Apollinian gives art its necessary shape and form, what Matthew Arnold reduces to the "sweetness and light" of all Hellenism, it is the Dionysian that Nietzsche focuses on, its emanation of the deeper primordial rhythm and movement, its unbridled creative and destructive force, even its bestial communion, which creates the feeling of "oneness" with nature by its release from Apollinian "individuation." The early Satyric chorus embodies the Dionysian element in Greek tragedy, gives it suasion over the "profound Hellene" who "comforts himself, having looked boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature, and being in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will. Art saves him, and through art—life" (*BT*, 59). The Greeks, Nietzsche avers, embraced the half-man, half-beast satyr as their own longing for the primitive, natural world, which had been deified in Dionysus.

It is through this logic that Nietzsche reads Dionysus as the hero of all Greek tragedy—Prometheus and even Oedipus masks of the original hero—until Euripides comes and ruins it all. An unjust treatment of Euripides, perhaps, but Nietzsche will have none of this "Greek

⁵⁰⁶ *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, translated, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), 48-50 & 65.

cheerfulness” that kills any semblance of the Dionysian impulse, and with it tragedy, everything ideal and deep and immortal that Hellenism should represent, instead of this invidious surface of cheerfulness: “as if there had never been a sixth century with its birth of tragedy, its mysteries, its Pythagorus and Heraclitus, as if the works of art of the great period simply did not exist, though these phenomena can hardly be explained as having originated in any such senile and slavish pleasure in existence and cheerfulness...” (78-79). Behind this “un-Dionysian art, morality, and world view” of Euripides we should not be surprised to find Socrates and Plato, Nietzsche’s sparring partners for several books to come. Euripides was “only a mask” for the deity of “an altogether newborn demon, called *Socrates*” (82).

This “aesthetic socratism” delivers beauty over to rationalism and conscious knowledge—“everything must be intelligible” or “everything must be conscious” following the Socratic dictum that “knowledge is virtue.” And the good pupil Plato will follow his master by burning his poems, transforming his dramatic gifts into the dialogues that “create an art form that was related to those forms of art which he repudiated” (90). Socrates becomes Plato’s hero, and the anti-Dionysus reigns in Nietzschean revelation. The slouching beast of *The Birth of Tragedy* is none other than Nietzsche’s mytho-poetic Socrates, the deity who gives form to the birth of science. The later Nietzsche will think himself his own anti-Christ, returning to dismember the rationalism of science and the morality of Christianity by tearing Dionysus limb from limb.

The Nietzschean narrative is worth retelling, not simply because it so forcefully dramatizes the saving grace of art and a tragic aesthetic, but because it anticipates and permeates the atmosphere of the generation preceding Woolf, which finds in logic and the intelligible – an “aesthetic socratism” – an incomplete aesthetics. Woolf’s fiction and essays certainly record this difference, despite a large sect of the English, she notes, “who slept undisturbed.”

Nietzsche's response to such complacency is his "Madman" in the marketplace of *The Gay Science* who explains to a bemused audience the ways science and rationalism have killed God; but he soon realizes his listeners have not considered the consequences: "This deed is still more distant from them than most distant stars---and yet they have done it themselves."⁵⁰⁷ Darwin, the scientist, had done the Dionysian thing of returning humanity to the primordial origins that Nietzsche believes are the great force of Greek tragedy (Freud, to be sure, is not far behind). Darwin was a strong enough presence, Margot Norris argues, to break Nietzsche of his "dual Metaphysics of Dionysus and Apollo."⁵⁰⁸ Nietzsche's will to power was his answer to Darwin, placing the will above survival as the primary force. "August, 1877: The influence of 'external conditions' is ridiculously overestimated by Darwin: the essence of the life process is precisely the monstrously formative, from the inside creative power, that uses and exploits external circumstances."⁵⁰⁹ In Nietzschean fashion, Heraclitus's philosophy of becoming that Darwin reincarnated, the same sense of becoming in *Untimely Meditations* that was in jeopardy of becoming a "has-been" to the whims of world process, only needs a Zarathustran will to power. Whereas Pater gave to aesthetics the "will as vision," Nietzsche gave will a superhuman value. By returning the will to this primary position, Nietzsche hoped to redeem humanity from the mechanistic determinism he sees in Darwin, and give his own art the capacity of self-generation. Ceaselessly active and mutating in Nietzsche, the will to power organizes and disperses in a struggle with the forces of nature. The child of historical process could yet defeat time by acting unhistorically, actively forgetting he lived in a time that seemed defeated by the evolutionary process that held history captive. "Form counts as something permanent and therefore more

⁵⁰⁷ *The Gay Science*, (1882, 1887) para. 125; Walter Kaufmann ed. (New York: Vintage, 1974), pp.181-82.

⁵⁰⁸ *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*, p.55.

⁵⁰⁹ *Friedrich Nietzsche-Werke, Vol. 4, "Posthumous writings from the 1880s, including the letters of 1861-1889,"* ed. Karl Schlechta (Frankfurt am Main-Berlin-Wien: Verlag Ullstein GmbH, 1976), p. 481, as trans. by Margot Norris.

valuable, but form is merely invented by us,” writes Nietzsche.⁵¹⁰ Only Nietzschean rhetoric could deconstruct the intellectual fabric behind Platonic form and then see the monstrously formative power of the individual will as the answer to Darwin’s forms, which are merely the by-product of natural selection. It is a riddle Nietzsche held on to as if he yearned for his own Oedipus to return and answer it for him.

*6.11: BERGSON, JAMES, RUSSELL, WOOLF

Nietzsche’s attack on Platonic thought, and the birth of science it engenders with his vision of history, must counter the effects of evolutionary process. But there is still another philosophy of thought that finds Darwin’s temporal upheaval a part of the answer rather than part of the problem. From it emerges the continuing dialogue in Modernist criticism over whether much of its literature may best be described as a spatial or a temporal form. I refer not just to the sporadic resurgence of discussion emerging from Joseph Frank’s essay “The Idea of Spatial Form in Modern Literature” (1945) and Frank Kermode’s response in *The Sense of an Ending* (1965), but what seem the more pertinent studies of temporality in which the debate is rooted. Nietzsche and Pater come to exemplify the crossing anti-currents of popular nineteenth century studies in Hellenism, particularly on the philosophy of Plato, as opposed to the gradual acceptance of evolutionary theory. It is a query they themselves attempt to answer in their own works, as we have attempted to assess, but the more commonplace approach was to find Platonic forms and Darwinian theory irreconcilable. At issue for us are the ethical questions asked of formal considerations, the intellectual and aesthetic milieu Woolf inherits. Lines were drawn well into the twentieth century, no more interestingly than in the debates of the Cambridge

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 117.

philosophers led by Bertrand Russell, who argue against the pragmatism of William James and the philosophy of time and creative evolution in Henri Bergson.

Nietzsche's attack on Platonism and the rationalism of science shares many of the arguments Bergson and James make against "intellectualism." The difference lies in their moral outlook and their respective cultural criticism. Bergson and James, in particular, do not abandon the values of the society they inhabit by forsaking the "herd mentality" Nietzsche so demonstrably loathed. Nietzsche's was always a perspective (and he was clear that his was a *perspective*, not a system of logic) that saw the intellectual giants speaking to each other above the slavish herd. Giants call to giants across the bridge of time, and his supermen do not need the society they overcome so much as they need to create a new one that they can inhabit and rule. Much as Nietzsche took Plato to task for believing his ideal forms to be universal rather than self-created, they do share the belief that democracy was not the ideal of a future Republic. It is intellectually aristocratic and authoritarian, to be sure, where Bergson and James are comfortable with (though critical of) the cultures they share; they still use terms like "progress" post-Darwin without flinching at the relativism. They, in other words, do the less revolutionary if more practical thing in taking the community with them rather than forging a new one. While Woolf is sometimes criticized for her snobbishness, especially her noted ambivalence towards the lower classes, her sense of community and commonality, even her aesthetic that develops a consciousness of community, bind her in perspective if not in philosophy to Bergson and James.

Bergson finds fault in Spencer and Lamarck, but still makes of evolutionary process a story of progress. His most important work, especially as it pertains to our subject, is *Creative Evolution* (1907), which begins: "The history of the evolution of life, incomplete as it yet is, already reveals to us how the intellect has been formed, by an uninterrupted progress, along a

line which ascends through the vertebrate series up to man.”⁵¹¹ The cohesion of Bergson’s philosophy breaks down when he becomes a speculative naturalist, when he turns to orthogenesis or Spencer for corroboration. It is the limitation of his philosophy, but it is not why Bergson remains valuable and it does not force us to dismiss the largely unrelated importance he would have for both James and the Modernist literature (Marcel Proust primarily) to which his work remains crucially linked. There has been much criticism on how Woolf’s writing bears an uncanny resemblance to the philosophy of Bergson, so much that even she and Leonard Woolf were responding to critics asking if she were influenced by Bergson. (She and Leonard claimed she never read any of his works, or even her sister-in-law’s book on Bergson⁵¹².) She did attend her sister-in-law’s lecture on Bergson in 1913,⁵¹³ and Michael Whitworth’s reply to the absence of evidence for Bergson in Woolf’s library, “that he was part of the intellectual atmosphere of the years 1910 to 1912,”⁵¹⁴ seems sensible enough. What most convincingly binds them in thought is their reading of Charles Darwin, and Jane Ellen Harrison’s panegyric reading of Bergson; what distinguishes Woolf from Bergson is her reading into Darwinian theory without flinching at the implications.

*6.12: BERGSON’S NEBULOUS CLARITY—THE ANTI-INTELLECTUALIST MOMENT

The value of Bergson for William James, why he could write – “Reading his works is what has made me bold,” – is Bergson’s analysis of logic, from Plato up through Spencer. James sees this as Bergson’s greatest achievement: “the essential contribution of Bergson to philosophy

⁵¹¹ *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, New York: Dover, 1998) ix. Future references will be cited in text as *CE*.

⁵¹² See *Letters of Leonard Woolf*, ed. by Frederic Spotts (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), pp. 485-6; *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, V*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: HBJ, 1979), p. 91; Karin Stephen’s *The Misuse of Mind* was published in 1922.

⁵¹³ See Anne Banfield, “Tragic Time,” p. 44.

⁵¹⁴ “Virginia Woolf and modernism,” *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Sue Roe and Susan Sellers, (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), p. 147.

is his criticism of intellectualism. In my opinion, he has killed intellectualism definitively and without hope of recovery. I don't see how it can ever revive again in its ancient platonizing rôle of claiming to be the most authentic, intimate, and exhaustive definer of the nature of reality."⁵¹⁵

This is not to say that either James or Bergson dismiss the use of logic. James makes this clear and Bergson articulates it such: "human intellect feels at home among inanimate objects, where our action finds its fulcrum and our industry its tools; that our concepts have been formed on the model of solids; that our logic is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids..." (*CE*, ix). But Bergson postulates that the leap from the intellect as a tool for action to intellectualism, in James's words, as "the definer of the nature of reality," is to obviate any insights into logic's relation to life that evolutionary theory has discovered: "... our thought, in its purely logical form, is incapable of presenting the true nature of life, the full meaning of the evolutionary movement. Created by life, in definite circumstances, to act on definite things, how can it embrace life, of which it is only an emanation or an aspect?" (*CE*, ix-x). Bergson essentially argues that a life conceived only through logic forces the life experienced by consciousness, his "vital process," into a mold too narrow, too confined, to contain it. The great achievement in thought would be to move beyond the spatialized world of a geometric intellect to the numerous, divergent paths that other organisms have traveled in their evolutions. "Suppose," writes Bergson, "these other forms of consciousness brought together and amalgamated with intellect: would not the result be a consciousness as wide as life?" (xii). To do so, Bergson would not have us transcend our intellect, but acknowledge "a vague nebulosity" that remains around our conceptual, logical thought. This gives consciousness "certain powers that are complementary to the understanding

⁵¹⁵ *William James: Writings 1902-1910* (New York: The Library of America, 1987), "The Compounding of Consciousness," *A Pluralistic Universe*, 726-27. Future references will be cited as *PU*.

powers of which we have only an indistinct feeling when we remain shut up in ourselves,” a perception of the expansion and intensification that “the evolution of nature” affords us (xii-xiii).

Bergson’s “vital impulse,” his “vague nebulousness,” or “concrete duration” might be dismissed as impressionist drivel, not a philosophy, if it weren’t for the intellectual rigor Bergson applies to the Platonic forms of knowledge that had left other philosophers only with their logical paradoxes or “dead-locks,” as Bergson describes them. “It is a miracle, and he a real magician,” gushes James in a description of Bergson’s style and analysis (*PU*, 426). Bergson’s most convincing argument against intellectualism, the one James repeats in *A Pluralistic Universe*, is his answer to the paradoxes of Parmenides and Zeno that had rendered, as far as Plato and all Platonists were concerned, the philosophy of Heraclitean flux an absurdity. It is also, we might interject, the same paradox that Pater recounts in *Plato and Platonism* towards his understanding of Plato’s “Doctrine of Rest” and the same notion of time that Pater suggests in “Conclusion” when he writes that our impressions are in perpetual flight, but limited by time: “[...]as time is infinitely divisible, each of [our impressions] is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it [...] (*TMT*, 319).⁵¹⁶ For Pater, the infinite divisibility of time provides the possibility of an infinite number of moments, gone even as they are apprehended, but allowing in theory the contraction of the “concrete moment” to the extent that the mind can capture, even prolong, what remains of our impressions.

Unlike the early Pater, Bergson derives from evolution the notion that we cannot in any way subject organic creation “to a mathematical treatment,” that “the present moment of a living body does not find its explanation in the moment immediately before, that *all* the past of the

⁵¹⁶ Inman argues that this passage of the conclusion probably derives from Hume’s *A Treatise of Pure Reason*, his section “Of the Infinite Divisibility of Our Ideas of Space and Time,” but to do so would only suggest that Pater disagreed with Hume, since Hume did not think time is infinitely divisible (“Pater’s Conclusion,” *Walter Pater*, 137-138). Given Pater’s expansion of it in *Plato and Platonism*, and Pater’s example of Heraclitus taken up by the Eleatic School, Zeno’s paradoxes as the original and intended source seem far more likely.

organism must be added to that moment, its heredity—in fact, the whole of a very long history” (*CE*, 20). This is Bergson’s “concrete duration,” the position that we are creating ourselves continually, that each moment of life is a creation, accumulating and continuing the past, “always being renewed” (20-23). Abstract time, in comparison, is merely speculation over artificial systems. Bergson’s famous use of the newly invented *cinematograph* becomes his metaphor of the intellect taking successive snapshots of each moment and the logician claiming them as the reality of time: “The application of the cinematographical method therefore leads to a perpetual recommencement, during which the mind, never able to satisfy itself and never finding where to rest, persuades itself, no doubt, that it imitates by its instability the very movement of the real” (307). But movement slips through the intervals, or leads to the absurd position posed by the Eleatic school of Parmenides and Zeno, Plato’s acknowledged forefathers for his doctrines of rest and form. Bergson reminds us that to accept any of Zeno’s paradoxes is to accept movement made of immobilities, that Zeno’s arrow, for instance, is always at rest during every moment of its flight: “though we can divide at will the trajectory once created, we cannot divide its creation,” Bergson writes, “which is an act in progress and not a thing” (309).

A mathematician will tell you Zeno’s paradoxes are logical fallacies, a way of confusing infinite properties with finite numbers, but they are also representative of the manner in which the mind makes quantitative or qualitative the progression of movement, a necessity to logic and physics but not to Bergson’s duration. Bergson distinguishes “qualitative becoming” and “evolutionary becoming” on the same principle, for instance when we classify infancy, adolescence, and adulthood as if they were permanent states rather than arbitrary stops along the passage of life. The child does not become the man in Bergson; rather, “There is becoming from the child to the man” (313). When applied to Plato’s philosophy of forms or ideas, Bergson

gives us the logical and erroneous basis of Plato's premise rather than the reactionary or historical need that Pater and Nietzsche both read into it:

Such, indeed, was the sentence passed by the philosophers of the Eleatic school. And they passed it without any reservation whatever. As becoming shocks the habits of thought and fits ill into the molds of language, they declared it unreal. In spatial movement and in change in general they saw only pure illusion. This conclusion could be softened down without changing the premises, by saying that the reality changes, but that it *ought not* to change. Experience confronts us with becoming: that is *sensible* reality. But the *intelligible* reality, that which *ought* to be, is more real still, and that reality does not change. Beneath the qualitative becoming, beneath the evolutionary becoming, beneath the extensive becoming, the mind must seek that which defies change, the definable quality, the form or essence, the end. Such was the fundamental principle of [...] the philosophy of Forms, or, to use a term more akin to the Greek, the philosophy of Ideas. (314).

The *eidos* of Plato, in short, is the stable view taken from the instability of things, plucking this snapshot of stability out of time and into the realm of eternity. And "when we put immutable Ideas at the base of the moving reality, a whole physics, a whole cosmology, a whole theology follows necessarily" (315). Thus, Plato's *eidos* might better be translated, as Bergson does, as a "moment" taken for the idea of eternity.

But this is precisely what Bergson views as the degradation of our "real" consciousness, the very flux of duration an existence embraced by Bergson rather than a poor substitute for eternity. The "is" and the "ought" are reevaluated: "He who installs himself in becoming sees in duration the very life of things, the fundamental reality. The Forms, which the mind isolates and

stores up in concepts, are then only snapshots of the changing reality. They are moments gathered along the course of time; and, just because we have cut the thread that binds them to time, they no longer endure. [...] They enter into eternity, if you will; but what is eternal in them is just what is unreal. (317)

Plato's god in *Timaeus* gives us "a moving image of eternity,"⁵¹⁷ his best approximation of the eternal in a world that only approximates its ideals. Bergson gives us his version of evolutionary descent that endures by placing us back into the flow of time, the Heraclitean flux seen within the evolutionary movement. Consciousness becomes synonymous with ceaseless creativity. The moment in Bergson overflows its artificial boundaries, expands with the entirety of its past rather than contract into the heady solitude of Pater's artistic creed. He is Nietzsche's man of historical process, but he is not the passive recipient of world process that Nietzsche ridicules. Bergson sets his ideals upon the active participation within the evolutionary flow.

Brilliant as James finds Bergson's absolute "inversion of the traditional platonic doctrine," Bergson imposes limitations upon evolutionary theory, and Darwin in particular, to make of it positive and affirming philosophy. Bergson gives us continuity of becoming by writing that the "reality which descends, endures only by its connection with that which *ascends*. But life and consciousness are this very ascension" (369). His criticism of Darwin rests (or moves, as he would have it) on finding adaptation to the environment, chance happenstances and circumstances, an insufficient theory for the vital impetus of life's process. Once again we see the *Origin of Species* given moral uplift by robbing Darwin's theory of its terrors, albeit in a more profound because a less predetermined interpretation than with Spencer. Remarkably absent in Bergson is any thought of extinction or annihilation; all things "unmade" are transformed into the ceaseless creativity of evolution, as if there were no possibility that

consciousness could be a thing lost as well as gained, as if “wide as life” were resistant to oblivion. This is Woolf’s keener insight into evolution, where the correspondence diverges the most. Non-being is not merely a problem of logic in Woolf.

✱6.13: THE PRAGMATIC STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

But Bergson’s greatest insight might be that the thoroughly mechanistic or deterministic outlook is not Darwinian or evolutionary, as Nietzsche and others would have it, but fixed systems of thought derived from Plato. Freedom of thought can ensue when time is transformed into possibility, consciousness into freedom of choice rather than simply recognition. *Time and Free Will* (1910) is Bergson’s struggle with the issue, but the more profound application of Bergsonism is James’s. Certainly James thinks Bergson relieves him definitively of any need to repeat the dead-ends of certain logical questions; but more importantly, James finds in Bergson a philosophy already synchronized to his own temperament.

James had well before written *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), where he gives us not only a chapter on “The Sense of Time,” but also one where he comes up with his metaphor of “The Stream of Consciousness.” Bergson claims he had not read *Principles of Psychology* before writing *Matter and Memory* or *Creative Evolution*, but the patterns of thought between them are present well before they meet or correspond. That association, like all ideas discussed here, has evolutionary theory as a link. There is nothing more Bergsonian or Jamesian than the oft-quoted phrase “the stream of consciousness;” and, of course, it is also often dropped altogether from the context of James’s *Psychology* and used by literary students and critics alike to describe any novel, including Woolf’s, which breaks traditional conventions of narrative. The simplicity of the metaphor says much about the quality of James’s insight, for the metaphor was

⁵¹⁷ *Timeaus*, 37 D, from which Bergson quotes, p. 318.

good enough to change the way we talk and therefore think about consciousness. Alfred North Whitehead writes that Bergson was the most characteristic philosopher of the twentieth century, partly because of his complete movement away “from the static materialism of the seventeenth century,” a feat accomplished by his “instinctive grasp of modern biology.” But Whitehead attributes to William James “the inauguration of a new stage in philosophy” through his challenges to the Cartesian ego and scientific materialism,⁵¹⁸ challenges undertaken by the same thinker, Whitehead notes, because of James’s background in physiology, psychology and philosophy. James’s professional shifting between the three fields, tempts us to treat each stage of James separately. But, as Ralph Balton Perry has argued, James the philosopher is in James the physiologist and psychologist, and vice-versa.⁵¹⁹ This interconnection establishes James as our most consummate and relevant philosopher and psychologist of consciousness, perhaps as Freud and the Viennese School are of the unconscious.

Placing James’s “stream of consciousness” into its original context affords us the opportunity to see through the surface of its significance:

But whatever past states appear with those qualities [of warmth and intimacy] must be admitted to receive the greeting of the present mental state, to be owned by it, and accepted as belonging together with it in a common self. The community of self is what the time-gap cannot break in twain, and is why a present thought, although not ignorant of the time-gap, can still regard itself as continuous with certain chosen portions of the past.

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as ‘chain’ or ‘train’ do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It

⁵¹⁸ *Science and the Modern World; Lowell Lectures, 1925*, (New York: Pelicon by arrangement with Macmillan, 1948) 143-149.

⁵¹⁹ “Introduction” to *Psychology*, viii.

is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life*⁵²⁰.

Consciousness is continuous in James as it is in Bergson, its only gaps the sleep that intervenes between "Peter's past" that "Peter's present" claims as his own when waking (158). The only way for James to describe this "community of self" that "the time-gap cannot break in twain" is an individual ownership or possession of self that has a "warmth and intimacy" about it. Whose thoughts are these that James feels he owns? Much as Freud and the psychoanalysts who follow him will question the autonomy of the self, especially by the interpretation of dreams that James peaceably sleeps through, it is worth noting that James never fixes upon a spatial construction of the self or ego that returns us to a stabilizing form or an allegorical determination of symbolic order. James rids us of the notion that consciousness is a Cartesian "entity" or an "original idea" by knowing it through its function. When James refers to "states" of mind, it is only to see the stream of consciousness moving at a varied pace, his "Substantive" and "Transitive" states of mind likened to a bird's alternate flights and perchings (160). Sensationalists will linger over the transitive aspect while Intellectualists will insist upon the substantive, doubting, like "Zeno's treatment of the advocates of motion," that transitive states exist (161). Moments of consciousness are known only by the "fringe" or "the halo of relations" that surround and escort them, much like Bergson's "vague nebulosity" accompanies our intellect and Woolf's "luminous halo, or semi-transparent envelope" surrounds consciousness.

⁵²⁰ *Psychology* (the abridged version of *Principles of Psychology* or what came to be known as the "Little Jimmie" of 1892), New York: World Publishing Co., 1948, p. 159. *Emphasis his, not mine*. All future references will be cited as *POP*.

James actually graphs his sense of these neural processes by a “line of time” whereby each moment overlaps the next, like “overtones in music” that “blend with the fundamental note, suffuse it, and alter it” (166-67). The mind only selects which notes to separate from the continuum, an act that has function for our thoughts but not by absolute abstraction. If we remember that Plato’s “general laws” in *Cratylus* hold Heraclitus’s “fluid matter” so that it “may be retained in vessels,” James avers that the “traditional psychologist” who employs neo-Platonic systems acts as if states of consciousness were separate entities, and not “the very smallest part of our minds as they actually live”:

The traditional psychology talks like one who should say a river consists of nothing but pailsful, spoonsful, quartpotsful, barrelsful, and other moulded forms of water. Even were the pails and the pots all actually standing in the stream, still between them the free water would continue to flow. It is just this free water of consciousness that psychologists resolutely overlook. (165)

Woolf’s writing, her consistent envisioning of consciousness and even reality in metaphors of water, seems too obvious to need mentioning. Nevertheless, we each mould our separate pailsful of significance by our “habits of attention,” and no two travelers see the very same city they visit together, just as artists ideally select for their story or painting nothing that will not harmonize with the whole they envision. Woolf’s Lily Briscoe asks, “What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored?” (51). It is a Platonic question that Woolf’s aesthetics continually poses. James’s response is that in this river of consciousness each individual travels alone. “No thought ever comes into direct *sight* of a thought in another personal consciousness than its own. Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law” (153).

*6.14: A BREACH IN CONSCIOUSNESS

By this breach—in which all of us travel between each person’s consciousness and the stream of consciousness—we come to understand how Darwin fits into James’s philosophy of psychology and his psychology of philosophy. Consciousness, like a society of individual beliefs, is pluralistic. Well before James firmly and explicitly put forth the terms “pragmatism” and “pluralism” as a philosophical correction or methodology, those “partial” or “provisional truths” were introduced in *Principles of Psychology*. Treating psychology as a science is for James merely the same methodology these “provisional beginnings of learning we call ‘the Sciences’ in the plural” use to stay within their own “arbitrarily-selected problems, and [...] ignore all others.”⁵²¹ James writes in his introduction: “Incomplete statements are often practically necessary” for time’s sake, but also to counter the rational treatment of the soul “as an absolute spirit of being” without reference to either the body or the environment that we inhabit. “But the richer insight of modern days perceives that our inner faculties are *adapted* in advance to the features of the world in which we dwell,” James continues, “adapted, I mean, so as to secure our safety and prosperity in its midst.” The prominent features of evolutionary theory, even the parts of Spencer that James finds useful—his rejection of the mind-body split and “the adjustment of inner and outer relations”—lead James to argue that “mind and world in short have been evolved together, and in consequence are something of a mutual fit” (4). The unfit, unadaptive mind James leaves to the study of psychiatry and “the study of the useless” province of adaptation “made over to ‘Aesthetics’” (4-5).⁵²² This was the realm of his brother Henry and

⁵²¹ *Principles*, “Chapter I, Introductory,” 1.

⁵²² Aesthetics indeed are not a province James often enters successfully, as his letters to Henry, which criticize the aesthetic principles of his later novels, amply testify. But “useless” here should be read, I think, as Roger Fry reads it in *Vision and Design*—namely, that aesthetic appreciations can be distinguished from the moral appreciations precisely by the processes of natural selection that force one to act in “actual life” but not “in the imaginative life.”

his acquaintance, Virginia Woolf. James's book is his working hypothesis and should not be taken absolutely if what can be discovered can only remain a "partial truth" (6).

"Fitness," indeed, is a crucial component in all of James. This adaptive fitness of the mind to the world gives James a way into evolution without ceding the ground to a material determinism or an absolute progression to which other evolutionary philosophers inevitably succumb; but his philosophy still succeeds in affirming a place for human will and ethical considerations inside the temporal process of consciousness and its evolutionary component. When James does apply such ethics to his discussion in "The Stream of Consciousness," the temporal continuum does not become settled by the pattern our past habits of behavior form. That capacity to change, and to change by acting, using the brain's very adaptive plasticity, frees us from a determined course, even if it seems by record of our entire past we have been launched on a false career:

What he shall *become* is fixed by the conduct of this moment. Schopenhauer, who enforces his determinism by the argument that with a given fixed character only one reaction is possible under given circumstances, forgets that, in these critical ethical moments, what consciously *seems* to be in question is the complexion of character itself. The problem with the man is less what act he shall now resolve to do than what being he shall now choose to become. (174)

Identity, the very notion of self in James, is accumulating to such an extent that he will later claim that our last thought is our best formulation of selfhood. The "I" which knows is not a separate physical entity but a functioning thought of self "at each moment different from that of the last moment," not a transcendental ego but an appropriation that leads James to his

astounding claim that “the thoughts themselves are the thinkers” (215-216). Such is the capacity of free will and change in James, good to our thought’s last thought.

Thus, we see the fundamental process that escorts James toward his pragmatic method. Mental practices and the methods of thought are our most effective adaptive mechanism. Our ideas should have practical promptings to actions, and those ideas should have practical consequences if they are to be of any value. One of the most often quoted passages from *Pragmatism*: “The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself”⁵²³ Process as the way towards truth is what we must ultimately employ, rather than a set principle or a fixed belief. It is the lesson Woolf’s writing continuously develops to arrive at her aesthetics, or what might be better termed as her varieties of aesthetics that adapt to the needs of her project at hand. Getting rid of the intellectualism’s abstractions has the expedient, practicable effects that the pragmatist and the novelist desire.

*6.15: PRAGMATIC DARWINISTS

Following Darwin’s evolutionary theory through the procession of history that makes our consciousness adaptive rather than determined does not necessarily mean, under pragmatism’s banner, that Darwin’s ideas should be the basis for our values. Louis Menand’s remarkable study of pragmatism distinguishes James’s continual use of Darwin from most of the other thinkers ineluctably influenced by *The Origin of Species*. “He was Darwinian, but he was not a Darwinist,” Menand writes. “This made him truer to Darwin than most nineteenth-century

⁵²³ *Pragmatism*, ed. and with an intro. by Bruce Kuklick (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981.) 92. Future references will be cited as *P*.

evolutionists.”⁵²⁴ Early on, When James reviewed Darwin’s *The Variations of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, James does not debate the question of design versus natural selection, but rather remarks that its “adversaries are those whose interest it is to establish the rigor of these descriptive laws [...]” That evolutionary theory seems a law of “Caprice” which accounts for all the idiosyncrasies in nature, that in fact anticipates them by the chance happenings of adaptation, makes it for James all the more useful. The great value of Darwin’s hypothesis is that it puts “naturalists to work” by “sharpening their eyes for new facts and relations.”⁵²⁵ James too is put to work by Darwin in *Principles of Psychology* and *Pragmatism* in attempting to account for varieties of truths as they happen upon us rather than establishing the one truth from the many. We have choices, and they need to be made by the fitness of their results rather than by any value based on their mere survival. Menand concurs when he writes:

The real lesson of *On the Origin of Species* for James—the lesson on which he based his own major work, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890)—was that natural selection has produced, in human beings, organisms gifted with the capacity to make choices incompatible with “the survival of the fittest.” It was our good luck that, somewhere along the way, we acquired minds. They released us from the prison of biology. (MC, 146)

Once more Spencer seems our bogeyman for evolutionary malpractice, for as much as James puts some of Spencer to good use in *Principles*, he disagrees with Spencer when adaptation itself, as interpreted by “the survival of the fittest,” becomes a basis for values. Rather, the mind is an instrument adapted to make choices, moral or otherwise, and thereby consciousness may steer a course free of its evolutionary history.

⁵²⁴ *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: FSG, 2001) 141. Future references will be cited as *MC*.

This is the practicable value James explores in *Pragmatism* when the questions of design or free will, whether it be the theist's or the absolutist's or the naturalist's, become questions of belief. James does not abandon "concrete realities" which inform the debate: "Darwinism has once for all displaced design from the minds of the 'scientific,' theism has lost that foothold" (35). But to make of Darwinism a "philosophic religion" entraps the naturalist into his own dogmatic materialism, and does not preclude the value of belief in an absolute – James believes that to be the comfort it delivers, his moral holiday:

What do believers in the Absolute mean by saying that their belief affords them comfort? They mean that since, in the Absolute finite evil is 'overruled' already, we may, therefore, whenever we wish, treat the *temporal as if it were potentially the eternal*, be sure that we can trust its outcome, and, without sin, dismiss our fear and drop the worry of our finite responsibility. In short, they mean that we have a right ever and anon to take a moral holiday [...]. (*emphasis added*, 36)

The question of temporality develops into the exploration of what good it does us. It does not mean James has resigned himself to the Absolutists or given in to their arguments—it still "clashes with other truths of mine" and "entangles me in metaphysical paradoxes that are unacceptable [...]." James gives up the absolute and just takes his moral holidays, and though Darwin "opened our minds to the power of chance-happenings to bring forth 'fit' results if only they have time to add themselves together," the debate over design or adaptation at issue matters little if there is still "fitness" in ourselves, "this vague confidence in the future" (52-54).

⁵²⁵ "Two Reviews of *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, by Charles Darwin," *The Works of William James; Essays, Comments, and Reviews* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988) 234-35.

What James means by this, by pragmatism more generally, is that a doctrine such as free will, though divested of its relations to predetermination, eternity or absolute power, still serves us and offers us a future:

Free will pragmatically means *novelties in the world*, the right to expect that in its deepest elements as well as its surface phenomena, the future may not identically repeat and imitate the past [...]. nature may be only approximately uniform; and persons in whom knowledge of the world's past has bred pessimism [...] may naturally welcome free-will as a *melioristic* doctrine. It holds up improvement as at least possible; whereas determinism assures us that our whole notion of possibility is born of human ignorance, and that necessity and impossibility between them rule the destinies of the world. (55)

James never cheats Darwin of his terror, nor does he cheat Darwin of his temporal open-endedness, for the natural history that Darwinism descends through in time leaves the furthest past and the nearest future unknown. This is the temporal open-endedness Woolf translates wholly into her aesthetics of semi-transparency; it enables her to play with the value of Platonic forms, to treat “the temporal as if it were potentially the eternal.” Those, save Nietzsche, who create a future course by evolutionary law fail to realize that we cannot, through Darwin's theory, predict the future. Its truth claims are enormous for James; Darwinism rids us of a perfect world order—“Who could desire free will” or “freedom, in a world already perfect...?—but allows in such a world that things might be better just as they might be worse (56). We can still take our moral holidays, have the relief of an absolute belief without conceding that an absolute position is the best or most truthful way to decide all matters of the future. Or, in other words, James's words at their most eloquent and worth quoting at length:

Free-will thus has no meaning unless it be a doctrine of *relief*. As such, it takes its place with other religious doctrines. Between them, they build up the old wastes and repair the former desolations. Our spirit, shut within this courtyard of sense-experience, is always saying to the intellect upon the tower: ‘Watchman, tell us of the night, if it aught of promise bear,’ and the intellect gives it then these terms of promise.

Other than this practical significance, the words God, free-will, design, etc., have none. Yet dark tho they be in themselves, or intellectualistically taken, when we bear them into life’s thicket with us the darkness *there* grows light about us. If you stop, in dealing with such words, with their definition, thinking that to be an intellectual finality, where are you? Stupidly staring at a pretentious sham! [...] Pragmatism alone can read a positive meaning into it, and for that she turns her back upon the intellectualist point of view altogether. (56)

James takes all the burning promises of philosophy and religion, seemingly extinguished from a Darwinian worldview, and gives them a promethean existence in the individual. These provisional lanterns, from the one Nietzsche’s madman extinguishes to the “vague nebulosity” of Bergson, the “gem-like flame” of Pater, or to the many aesthetic equivalents in the semi-transparent, half-lights in Hardy, Conrad, and of course Woolf, all share something of James’s more limited but enlightening perspective. A temporary glow rather than an eternal radiance still provides moral relief, moments of vision, moments of being.

*6.16 RUSSELL’S REBUTTAL

Not all philosophers saw the positive meaning in James's *Pragmatism*, especially its confounding, gleeful dismissal of Logic with a capital 'L' and its partial accommodation of religious beliefs in the face of empirical facts. And since there was no mind of his generation more logically trained and brilliantly empirical than Bertrand Russell's, it is no surprise that he criticizes James quickly after *Pragmatism* was published and then successively during his long, productive writing life. In "William James's Conception of Truth," Russell admirably applies his skills as a logician to dissect and parse many of James's phrases, particularly his account of pragmatic truth. Thus, James's many metaphors on truth needing a "cash value"—that is, they must pay to be believed—leads Russell to test that value with "belief in the Roman Catholic Faith."⁵²⁶ The consequences of the belief may be good or bad, but the attempt to classify them as on the whole good or bad is "practicably" useless because so disputable. "It is far easier," Russell writes, "to settle the plain question of fact: 'Have Popes been always infallible?' than to settle the question whether the effects of thinking them infallible are on the whole good" (118-119). What Russell argues is that Pragmatism confuses meaning of truth with criterion, which is not even useful because "it is usually harder to discover whether a belief is useful than whether it is true" (129). And then Russell displays the logician's tools at their sharpest—"since no *a priori* reason is shown why truth and utility should always go together, utility can only be shown to be a criterion at all by showing inductively that it accompanies truth in all known instances, which requires that we should already know in many instances what things are true. Finally, therefore, the pragmatist theory of truth must be condemned on the ground that it does not 'work'" (130).

This unwittingly plays right into James's criticism of taking logic too absolutely, and he makes easy work of it in his response. James defends himself plainly on the one count by writing: "Good consequences are not proposed by us merely as a sure sign, mark, or criterion, by

⁵²⁶ "William James's Conception of Truth," *Philosophical Essays*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968) 118.

which truth's presence is habitually ascertained, though they may indeed serve on occasion as such a sign; they are proposed rather as the lurking *motive* inside every truth claim, whether the 'trower' be conscious of such motive, or whether he obey it blindly."⁵²⁷ In the example of Roman Catholicism, for example, Russell jumps straight from the individual believer to the truth of a belief—"Have all popes been infallible"—forgetting that pragmatism works individually: "[...] truth in human life," James responds, "can only be used relatively to some particular trower" (963). Russell's other accounts all fall under more of that "vicious abstractionism," the attempt to affix pure logic and mathematical formula without admitting that these terms do not translate that in human terms: "When one argues by substituting definition for definition, one needs to stay in the same universe" (966); James's pluralistic universe is not, in other words, designed upon the universal truth claims. Pragmatism, James avers, can at the very least save us from the "diseased abstractionism" so wholly divorced from the reality of problems that pragmatism seeks to answer.

The nuances of both arguments are finer than these few examples show, but of more interest than such displays of a supreme logician debating a supreme pragmatist are the origins and consequences Russell reads into his criticism of *Pragmatism* and its like companions. A year later, before Russell had the opportunity of reading James's response to his criticism, he published an anonymous review entitled "Pragmatism" (1909) that delves far deeper into a political reading of the pragmatic method and its concurrent historical ramifications. Here, the "lurking *motive*" of good consequences that James finds every "trower" attempting to ascertain is precisely what Russell questions. Consider Russell's usual grouping of pragmatism, particularly James's *Pragmatism*, with Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche, a happy convergence of the philosophers discussed here, but also indicative of how Russell reads into this grouping a

⁵²⁷ "Two English Critics," *William James: Writings 1902-1910* (New York: The Library of America, 1987) 962.

dangerous evolutionary tendency of thought that pragmatism most pervasively represents. A few passages should exemplify Russell's position:

The philosophy of evolution has also had its share in generating the pragmatic tone of mind. It has led people to regard everything as fluid and in process of development, everything as passing by imperceptible gradations into everything else [...] Hence it has come to be felt that all sharp antitheses, such as that as true and false, must be blurred, and all finality must be avoided. [...] And between different claimants for truth, we must provide a struggle for existence, leading to the survival of the strongest. All this is admirably effected by the pragmatic theory of truth. M. Bergson, whom pragmatists claim as an ally, may be regarded as embodying this tendency.⁵²⁸

And,

The habit of mind which believes that there are no essential impossibilities has been fostered by the doctrine of evolution, with its literary corollary of the *Uebersensch*. [...] In the absence of any standard of truth other than success, it seems evident that the familiar methods of the struggle for existence must be applied to the elucidation of difficult questions, and that ironclads and Maxim guns must be the ultimate arbiters of metaphysical truth. (108-9)

A close scrutiny of James, Bergson, and Nietzsche do not bear many of the generalizations Russell equates with pragmatism. The *Uebersensch*, as this chapter articulates, was Nietzsche's antithetical answer to the doctrine of evolution, though a will to power does share an inevitable corollary to force and struggle, a conflation Nietzsche attempts, in his saner moments, to downplay, but that nevertheless has some drastic consequences when appropriated

by the misprision of those who seek power through will. Russell conflates Nietzsche with pragmatism and Bergsonism in their favorable appreciations of the will and subjectivity in a time of metaphysical uncertainty. But he also conflates any positive application of evolutionary thinking as a Spencerian struggle, a characterization from which James works hard to distance himself. In this sense, the will to believe and the will to power hardly seem to share anything but a verbal kinship, which Russell somewhat acknowledges before condemning both of them on the grounds that they lead to the same consequences: “The worship of force, as we find it in Nietzsche, is not to be found in the same form in William James, who, though he lauds the will and the life of action, does not wish action to be bellicose. Nevertheless, the excessive individualism of the pragmatic theory of truth is inherently connected with the appeal to force” (109). If there are no standards of an abstract, “non-human truth” to which disputants may appeal, Russell argues that the pragmatic reconciliation of competing truths, shorn from absolute judgment, have no recourse but to “ironclads and Maxim guns,” when powers of the state are controlled by individual wills. James’s individualistic principles become adaptive to “democracy at home and to imperialism abroad,” a fitting formula for the next “Napoleonic domination” (110-111). This is the Russell whose pacifism already felt threatened by a Bismarck in Germany arming his country for imperialistic expansion; and we need only jump ahead to Alfred Rosenberg’s claimed sources of James, Dewey, and Schiller for *Myth of the Twentieth Century* to realize that a partial understanding of pragmatism’s partial truths could be employed toward the unpragmatic ends of the Third Reich.

Surely pragmatism, in the form James gives us, pleads innocent to this misapplication, as much as Russell’s devoted study of physics and mathematics remains innocent to the development of atomic bombs. If we believe something, we find our truths and await our proofs,

⁵²⁸ “Pragmatism,” *Philosophical Essays*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968) 105-106.

as some characters in Beckett are still waiting for their Godot. James insists that any claims derived from them must be as provisional as the reasons we went looking for them. The sweeping generalizations and intemperance of Russell's criticism were enough to provoke the unusually temperate, fellow pragmatist John Dewey to say, "You know, he gets me sore."⁵²⁹ When linking pragmatic origins to pragmatic consequences, perhaps because of the generational and the Atlantic divide, Russell fails to consider how much James's pragmatism has a strong historical precedent in the American Civil War, a position ably demonstrated in R. W. B. Lewis's family biography of *The Jameses* and expanded in Menand's *The Metaphysical Club*. For if the pragmatist's position takes from evolutionary theory that ideas, like species, are not immutable, that their survival and value depends on their adaptability, it was also a position that held dissenting or competing truths to be tolerable, and that tolerance in fact was necessary to avoid another war. This is Menand's argument, that under pragmatic tenets, "the moral justification for our actions comes from the tolerance we have shown to other ways of being in the world, other ways of considering the case. The alternative is force. Pragmatism was designed to make it harder for people to be driven to violence by their beliefs" (*MC*, 440). Russell wished to keep the peace by an infallibly logical universe that renders a justice independent of our human fallibilities and the perverted rationalizations which individuals use to justify war; James believed that beliefs in truths needed to be divorced from any absolute law, even evolutionary struggle pronounced as natural law, so that the practicable effects of believing in something could not resort to divine rights or appeals to an eternal order as a justifications for war. Struggle with the ideas, enlist the facts, see the consequences of holding beliefs in relation

⁵²⁹ Qtd. From *The Metaphysical Club*, 375, and referenced from *Dialogue on John Dewey*, ed. Corliss Lamont, (New York: Horizon Press, 1959) 335.

to those that seem incompatible, and then act upon them (even in compromise) with a good, tolerant conscience.

Such are the debates that arise after Darwin's temporal upheaval: between Russell versus James and Bergson over the consequences of holding truths to be as mutable as the individual who thinks them; between Nietzsche and the Hegelians over the moral value of historical process and becoming after Darwin; between Pater's aesthetic translation of evolutionary theory for life and his critics, who condemn its moral relativism. It would be the unique, holistic absorption of these debates by Jane Ellen Harrison, who took sides definitively but found a compelling balance between the Greek ideal and evolutionary theory that found a welcome audience with Woolf. Harrison's regard—not just of Darwin's evolutionary theory but the philosophies of time and consciousness applied to classicism, ritual, art, and gender—would provide Woolf a personal exemplar and example as a burgeoning writer. While such a list suggests a linear passage from one thinker or thinkers to another, with Woolf such transmissions and applications are never straightforward as a logician's handbook. The voracious reader and reviewer and conversationalist that she was, not least regarding the Greek classics and the Darwinian texts and many of the figures writing and discussing them, Woolf lets her influences and the theories behind them wash over and through her like a sieve, catching what is necessary when it is necessary for the work in progress. In those formative years between 1904 and 1919, between her first forays into fiction and her drafting of her first experimental novel *Jacob's Room*, Woolf's formulates her aesthetics of semi-transparency. Dynamic and fluid and adaptive, they originate in a belief and a working principle that allows for temporal open-endedness, to use James's term. It also seeks in its narrative configuration to capture a consciousness as wide as

life and as extended as evolutionary time, to adopt Bergson's terms. Yet it will contain multitudes and contradictions. Moments do strike into stability, and Woolf envelopes her fluidity of thought and prose into a harder geometry, a shapened thing. Platonic pattern, if you will, takes temporary shape and in the shaping attempts to bridge vision with design, the moment of vision capturing but subsumed by moments of being. "How to describe a world seen without a self?" Woolf's scribbling character Bernard in *The Waves* wonders, a fictive mouthpiece of Woolf wishing to vanquish the egotism of the "I" in fiction, the masculine bar that looms like a tower, casts a cold shadow, and imposes itself on the reader. Woolf's feminine sentence would attempt to do the opposite.

✧Chapter Seven: Inclusive Inconclusions✧

✧7.1 THE SUMMER OF 1906

I have already discussed at length the very earliest short stories contained within Woolf's unpublished manuscripts that showcase her vision of Greece and the Greek ideal, as it came to be employed through Woolf's male and female inheritance of that ideal from her forbears and contemporaries of the 19th to early 20th centuries. Alongside those early Grecian tales is also "The Monkeys," a fragment that might be Woolf's earliest preserved piece of fiction, by appearance and manuscript most closely resembling those of both "Phyllis and Rosamond" and "A Vision of Greece" from the summer of 1906.⁵³⁰ "The Monkeys" is florid, impressionistic prose, some of the best in Woolf's early fiction. In it, she moves swiftly from imagery of melons on a Paris or London breakfast table consumed by "trouser"-wearing primates to a jungle with a pair of young monkeys she follows from morning breakfast to the following dawn. Through the maze of trees they swing and leap as if they were "following the curves of some swift dance" until they reach the highest tree in the canopy (325). She provides them a vision atop the trees—of the sun and landscape and all its vivid, shimmering colors under the sun's "rays of flame into which the sky had burst." There is little to no characterization of the monkeys, though they are given a knowledge of survival shared with the other forest inhabitants: "The monkeys knew of the great battle that was daily fought; they could not have been such swift powerful creatures had they not moved always in an air of fierce conflict and crisis." Naturalist observation is interspersed with memorable figurative language and painterly description, like the bed of glossy leaves which were "as cold as sheets of lawn" in the "cool ocean of shade washing above them." Her narration

⁵³⁰ See Susan Dick's "Notes" to the Appendices in *Complete Shorter Fiction* regarding the dating of "The Monkeys", p. 339.

follows their trajectory from canopy to forest floor. When night, the language that traces their passing moments grows cosmic in perspective, with the perpetual movements of sun and moon and animal in step with the same mysterious dance the narrator had imagined the monkeys following through the curves of the trees: "But not all slept; the dance was carried on by firefly and leopard, and the silver light and the red light passed mysteriously round and round and through and through the forest, as though they wove some magic web across their sleeping brothers."⁵³¹ It is a world, in short, unpeopled, and though conventional in its narrative form, inaugurates Woolf's beloved trope of imagining a world seen without a self, at least without a human self and all his self-consciousness, where there is destiny constructed independent of human needs. Like one of Woolf's most haunting later essays, "The Sun and the Fish," the revolutions of stars and the evolutions of animals occupy most all of Woolf's attention.

To juxtapose this fragment alongside Woolf's "Vision of Greece" and "Phyllis and Rosamond," to locate them all chronologically in that same imaginative space in June of 1906, is to gain a portrait of how the two juvenile enthusiasms for natural history and Greek studies begin their revolutions and evolutions through her writing. It is all there.

***7.2 THE FALL OF 1918**

The short distance, then, between this timeframe and the fall of 1918 a dozen years later, only offers a variation upon the theme, but at this juncture the theme would have profound consequences for Modern fiction. Virginia Woolf was living at Asheham house in Sussex, finishing *Night and Day*, steadily writing reviews, and intermittently taking breaks from both by composing the short stories eventually published in *Monday or Tuesday*. "The Mark on the Wall" had been written the year before and became the first publication of The Hogarth Press.

⁵³¹ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 324-25

Women had gained the right to vote in England that February. The success of the Allies at Amiens in August meant that there was talk of peace with the Germans, and Leonard Woolf had helped co-found The League of Nations. “Kew Gardens” was in the process of being typeset and would go to press in December. Woolf was reading voraciously and variously, including James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Katherine Mansfield’s *The Prelude* in manuscript as a submission to Hogarth.⁵³² Despite the physical rigor of living in the country, in part to avoid the prospect of German air raids, it was a time of great mental health, vigor and vitality for Woolf—it had been over three years since her last breakdown. Her essay “Modern Novels” would in a few months lay out Woolf’s terms for a Modern literature of her own and reveal the principles with which she was experimenting in her short stories.

A peculiar passage appears among Woolf’s expansive entries in her diaries, a teasingly enigmatic record of her intellectual interests and fecundity. It begins,

I spend the first five minutes with this book before me trying to fish two drowned flies out of my ink pot on the tip of my pen; but I begin to see that this is one of those undertakings which are quite impossible — absolutely impossible. Not Darwin or Plato could do it with the tip of my pen. And now the flies are increasing & dissolving; today there are three. At Asheham I naturally bethink me of Darwin & Plato⁵³³ [...].

While the image seems quaint in the twenty-first century, flies often did drown in the writer’s ink—pots stood open on writing desks with blotting paper nearby and the flies mistook the opaque, still pool for a solid object upon which to land. Woolf could not have landed upon a better metaphor for Darwinian circumstance than the fly’s predicament, with the incongruities

⁵³² *The Prelude* they did publish, but *Ulysses* was too long to be taken on by the Woolfs’ small press.

⁵³³ *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I: 1915-1919*, ed. By Anne Olivier Bell (New York: HBJ, 1977). 192.

between instinct and design, adaptation and environment. She finds in the flies a quick metaphor for her work, swarming thoughts and generative ideas sinking into her inkpot so that she might fish out some writing for the day. Darwin and Plato, Woolf's catch, fancifully evade her and dissolve.⁵³⁴ Two days earlier, Woolf recalled "lying on the side of a hollow, waiting for L[eonard] to come & mushroom, & seeing a red hare loping up the side & thinking suddenly 'This is Earth life'. I seemed to see how earthy it all was, & I myself an evolved kind of hare."⁵³⁵

Darwin *would* come to mind at Woolf's house in Sussex, with dead flies collecting at her desk, the vegetative and animal life abuzz, and the downs rather than Downing Street before her. Why Woolf then makes associations to Plato, in a setting that seems so characteristically Darwinian in its implications, is a question informed by her balancing of the two great intellectual passions she consistently poses in her fiction. She was migrating at this juncture from what occupied the emplotment of her characters to what she would embed in the structure of the writing itself. Those early short stories explore dialogue and the limitations imposed upon it. The flies dissolve, but a dialogue of Plato finally "hardens and intensifies into truth," Woolf writes seven years later, despite the various procession of people entering and leaving the conversation. Socratic dialogue requires a setting of utmost civility and hospitality, often during the course of a good dinner served among friends and acquaintances: "It is Plato who reveals life indoors," Woolf declares.⁵³⁶ These are the convivial exchanges in private enclosures that Darwin, the voyaging naturalist, the retiring English country gentleman scientist, the keenest observer of the natural world, humbly leaves and leaves open. Darwin, in Woolf's imagination,

⁵³⁴ Of peripheral interest are the three new "flies" that then appear in her diary: Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Milton. They, unlike Darwin and Plato, are discussed directly, with ease and conviction; Milton, she states with great portent, "was the first of the masculinists" (190).

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.* 190.

⁵³⁶ "On Not Knowing Greek," *The Common Reader*, Ed. and Intro. by Andrew McNeillie. (New York: HBJ, 1925) 32.

never hardens or intensifies, never secures or encloses, the truth not in the end result but in the process of an expansive, boundless variety.

What transpires here appears inconsequential in the context of those extremely consequential years for Virginia Woolf and all affected by the current crises in European civilization, but Darwin and Plato are intensely present in Woolf's writing throughout her early years, and indeed throughout her entire body of writing. Woolf brings Darwin and Plato to the tip of her pen because they are major contrasting forces in her work, the two most representative figures of a philosophical and aesthetic debate that had begun shortly after Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species*. Darwinian theory is behind some crucial components of Woolf's departure from conventional novel writing and narrative form. The shifting stability of Plato and the Greek aesthetic counterpoises the Darwinian aspects to Woolf's thinking and writing.

*7.3 EARLY TIME PASSAGES

The summer of 1906 and the fall of 1918—two touchstone passages of time in Woolf's writing that, threaded together and pulled to the surface, catch Woolf at pivotal moments of her literary endeavor. They announce the conscious arrival of Virginia Stephen the writer and the formation of Virginia Woolf the Modernist. These preceding chapters have honed in on these two significant moments in her literary life to indicate how Darwin and Greece are there early and often, and *how they are there early and often*. I have attempted to also show why Woolf's later contemplation regarding the "solid and the shifting" aspects of life and narrative is a formulating thought for her there from the very beginning of her writing career, how behind that thought are her readings of Darwin's evolutionary theory and her studies in Greek antiquity. More intimately, they both also derive from Woolf's great childhood passions of "bugging" with

the family "Entomological Society" and of course the reading, especially from the Greek classics that afforded her the closest approximation to the formal male education denied her.

In doing so, I have also argued that a Victorian inheritance of the Greek ideal, compounded by its acquisition and institutionalization in male public schools, offsets and complicates Woolf's appreciation of her actual readings and responses to Greek literature in ambivalent, contradictory ways, the same ways they manifested themselves in British culture and the Cambridge Bloomsburies who formed her closest male friendships and literary alliances. The major strain of Victorian Hellenism broadly understood, synthesized, and disseminated by influential 19th century critics like John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, largely solidify the Greek ideal as Woolf came to envision it via this male lineage. It is a Platonizing, originating formation of both literature and character. The other figures of British Hellenism, however, the ones Frank Turner calls the "Evolutionary Hellenists" who emerge from the late 19th to the early 20th century in Darwin's wake, offer Woolf a profound alternative to the solidity of the Greek ideal, a female lineage that can be said to merge Pater's aesthetics with Harrison's scholarship. From this feminine lineage Woolf branches out to form a feminist aesthetic that is evolutionary as well as revolutionary. In short, she draws from the Greek and the naturalist vision a dynamic process, a metaphor to write by that undulates between the solid and the shifting tendencies in her thought. It evokes and ultimately invokes a "discovery of technique" for fiction, what she famously sketches in her essay "Modern Fiction" as "a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope" surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end that the novelist must trace and score. Solid and shifting, engraved and evanescent, granite and rainbow...—Woolf employs an abundance of metaphors to describe the opposing, contradictory forces that at any given moment she attempts to bestow upon a moment recorded but just as soon gone while apprehended.

Pulling these moments out from the narrative stream and prolific outpouring that is Woolf's writing life also accomplishes what Bergson feared in the "Platonizing" problem of any train of thought, that it segments an instant of time taken for the whole, pebbles on the beach that cannot explain the movement of the wave that brought them there. Focusing on such broad and all-encompassing spheres of influence as Grecian antiquity and Darwinian theory impacting Woolf at these key junctures does also make evident, amply, how the pull of literary relations really do stop nowhere, even though we, as Henry James instructed, have to draw our circle somewhere. What Woolf counters, in response, is that such spheres of influence and circles of inclusion are never fully circumscribed. They carry with them a vague nebulosity, and to enclose it wholly and arrive singularly at a nugget of truth is indeed a fiction. In fiction and in criticism, certainly in Virginia Woolf's own, those oscillations between these two big ideas and all their coterminous thinkers reverberate from her earliest works all the way through to her latest.

***7.4 THE FALL OF 1940**

There is also the fall of 1940—Beyond it and the winter to come, we know, is Woolf's suicide drowning in the River Ouse, but before her is the completion of Pointz Hall, what would come to be named *Between the Acts*, a fitting title for the writer whose fictional career emerged between the two World Wars. She was also intermittently writing entries into her memoir posthumously titled "A Sketch of the Past," and though incomplete undeniably one of Woolf's greatest achievements. That October 20th, the Woolfs returned to Tavistock Square to their bombed out house, and in her journal she records the ruins in a list of fragmentary impressions and catalogues of what remained. When she climbs through the dining room to arrive at her sitting room, she writes, "A wind blowing through. I began to hunt out diaries. What cd we

salvage in this little car? Darwin & the Silver, & some glass & china."⁵³⁷ Just the month previous they'd been relieved that their house had remained unscathed from that week's bombings, when not far away they stood by Jane Harrison's former house, "still smouldering."⁵³⁸ These last two years of diary entries might more rightly be called war journals. Gruesome misfortune is catalogued, but also a poetic accounting—telling in the way every war story is telling by what an individual chooses to salvage from it. This is her Victorian inheritance, or what remained of it for Virginia Woolf. Her childhood surely Victorian, the silver and the china service that came along with the sidelong conversations that had impeded and interrupted every advance in her writer's life but had also in all its disadvantages given her a vantage from which to write outside the patriarchal enclosures as she'd found them. Then there was the Darwin beside it, the works by the Victorian gentleman naturalist whose excursions in life and science did more to undo the structure and edifice of the Victorian heritage than any other text pulled from the wreckage.

Poetically though we can read into the gathering of Darwin and the silver above anything else that remained, there was still a practical intention. That spring Woolf had been reading about apes, which gave her the thought to do a "C[ommon]. R[eader]. on Darwin" with the first section on his Voyage of the Beagle and the second on him settling at Downe for the remainder of his life to gather and theorize and accumulate the evidence for the origin of species by means of natural selection.⁵³⁹ In a sense, Woolf already had written her version of these two narratives, from the voyage of *The Voyage Out* (or even earlier "The Monkeys") to the naturalist's description and structure come home to England in "Kew Gardens"; ultimately, at the last, she would describe this as the "naturalists" method in her writing of *Between the Acts*: "I observe, as

⁵³⁷ Diary V., Oct. 1940, p. 331.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

a curious trifle in mental history—I shd like to take naturalists notes—human naturalists notes—that is the rhythm of the book....The rhythm of PH [Pointz Hall] (the last chapter) became so obsessive that I heard it, perhaps used it, in every sentence I spoke....The rhythm of the notes is far freer & looser. Two days of writing in that rhythm has completely refreshed me.”⁵⁴⁰

Over these last few months she had also been reading Greek again, intermittently, to "anchor her mind," she said, as a way to tap into what was solid and durable in a time of war. One of her best late essays on modern fiction, "The Leaning Tower," had just been written, which marks the final chapter in Woolf's brilliant assessment on the role of education and writing for women and men. In her diary the next day, awaiting the publication of "The Leaning Tower" in the *Times Literary Supplement* of November 23rd, she taps into this naturalist's methodology by thinking through the "Tower dwellers" of the Oxbridge educated men of her essay, but she reimagines and transposes the metaphor to the "queer little sand castles" of so many male writers:

Little boys making sand castles....Each is weathertight, & gives shelter to the occupant. I think I can follow Read's building [the reviewer she was reading in *The Spectator*]; so far as one can follow what one cannot build. But I am the sea which demolishes these castles. I use this image.... his self that built the castle is to me destructive of its architecture...What is the value of a philosophy which has no power over life? I have the double vision. I mean, as I am not engrossed in the labour of making this intricate word structure I also see the man who makes it. I should say it is only word proof, not weather proof. We have to discover the natural law & live by it. We are anarchists: We take the leap (glory that is) from what we know to be instinctive....But of course, being a tower

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

dweller, Read walls them in, others out. *Plato of course did not write reviews for The Spectator*. I can thus endow him with a purity that is impossible....I am carrying on, while I read, the idea of women discovering, like the 19th century rationalists, agnostics, that man is no longer God....It is essential to remain outside; & realise my own beliefs; or rather not to accept theirs. (340, *emphasis mine*)

Indeed, Woolf had already developed a fictional form that undulated like the sea and was attuned to the shifts of time and temporality. Quite deliberately, she identifies herself as an "anarchist" in reference to Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* that would have its male tower dwellers still inhabiting and building upon the foundations of the Greek ideal. This ideal, too, she appreciated and occupied as a conceptual framework that might contain, if only in passing, the moments of vision that strike into stability the edifice of her fiction, especially from *Jacob's Room* to *The Waves*. At this vantage of time, Woolf saw clearly what her fiction had already accomplished, as well as the ideas that helped her accomplish it—"Plato of course did not write reviews," meaning she could still idealize this male writer and the ideas she had embraced, though in the 20th century, he too, would have been a tower dweller. Even at this last phase, Woolf is still working out the rhythm of thought that continuously formed and reformed in her fictional endeavors. The dynamic between the solid and the shifting in Woolf's fiction emerges from these two formations: of the Greek ideal and the unsettling Darwinian disintegration of that ideal.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 339.

✧Chapter Eight: Coda✧

✧8.1 RIP VAN WINKLES

A deferred dissertation, particularly one deferred almost two decades, inevitably wakes up to its own critical Rip Van Winkles. In 1999, when I began the research and writing for this thesis in earnest, to speak of Woolf's deep engagement not just with the sciences but with Darwin and evolutionary theory was, if not an original lens through which to see her texts and ideas, one that had not been much in use. Gillian Beer, it is true, had her collection of essays on Woolf and science, *The Common Ground* (1996), which essentially opened the field for critical discourse pertaining to Woolf and the "hard" sciences, especially the life sciences and evolutionary theory. It was fortuitous indeed that Beer, while drafting and revising the essays on Woolf that would appear in *The Common Ground*, contemporaneously edited and wrote the "Introduction" to the Oxford World Classic's edition of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1996 as well. Her thinking for both had already been informed and enriched substantially by her research and writing of the groundbreaking study *Darwin's Plots* (1983) which looked at George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and other nineteenth century novelists who immediately wrote and responded to evolutionary theory in Darwin's wake. Still, to broach the subject of science and Woolf, Beer had to introduce the topic by asserting "the importance of challenging the long-standing assumption that Woolf was 'ignorant and uninterested in science.'"⁵⁴¹ Even to argue a primary rather than secondary engagement of Woolf in philosophy and the sciences required some buttressing—the strong, essential feminist voice and alternative to the male Modernist canon had been established, but the notion of her domesticated and effete aesthetic, a watered down version of James Joyce's, still stood as a respected critical ruin.

Then came Ann Banfield's formidable, comprehensive study of Woolf, Bertrand Russell, Roger Fry, and the epistemology of Modernism in *The Phantom Table* (2000), and the field widened considerably more to include the great philosophical and scientific debates regarding temporality and physics—debates in which Woolf's father Leslie Stephen had a strong voice well before the issues engaged the entire early 20th century Bloomsbury crowd and found their mimetic representations and experimentations in Woolf's literature as well as Fry's art and literary criticism. Slowly but surely other studies followed. When I presented a paper at the 2003 International Virginia Woolf conference at Smith College, I was one of only three on a panel that focused on "Virginia Woolf and the Sciences." Holly Henry was there to discuss and present her book, just released, on *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy* (2003). My topic was "Darwin's Temporal Aesthetics" as they had been reimagined by Walter Pater and Woolf, the germ of what would become my sixth chapter here; Brenda Lyons joined us to discuss her dissertation's thesis on Plato and Woolf. Because her topic, too, touched upon Pater, the three of us were paired together to represent the interest of Woolf in classical philosophy and science. When you thumb through the itinerary and lists of topics, that about covered the philosophical or scientific explorations as it pertained to Woolf as an engaged *primary* reader and interpreter of either, though there was an excellent display of Leonard and Virginia's botanical interests at Smith's own botanical gardens.

Compare this to just seven years later, at the 20th International Virginia Woolf Conference, when the subject was *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*—papers now abound on Woolf, natural history, evolution, and the sciences.⁵⁴² Bonnie Kime Scott's "Keynote

⁵⁴¹ See both *The Common Ground*, "Introduction," and Christina Alt's comments in *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*, (Cambridge UP, 2010), p. 4-5.

⁵⁴² topics archived at <http://www.georgetowncollege.edu/Departments/English/Woolf>.

Address” at the conference on “Ecofeminism, Holism, and the Search for Natural Order in Woolf” highlights what has become perhaps the largest emergent field in Woolf studies that pertains significantly and finds profound correspondence to the work undertaken in this thesis—namely, the emergence of ecological criticism and its important pairings with feminist and phenomenological studies of Woolf, dubbed “ecofeminism” and “ecophenomenology.” Indeed, critical monographs large and small in these fields have proliferated of late to include Diana Swanson’s closing remarks at the 20th International Conference on “Woolf and Ecofeminism,” Christina Alt’s *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (2010), Bonnie Kim Scott’s *In the Hollow of the Wave* (2012)—which was conceived in large part through her participation at the Woolf conference— and most recently Mark S. Morrisson’s overview of ecofeminism, Woolf, and the sciences in his chapter on “Life Sciences” in *Modernism, Science, and Technology* (2016).⁵⁴³ Woolf’s numerous, even ubiquitous allusions to and passages on the natural world—from its moths, butterflies and plants to the dogs and horses abundantly populating her works—most often drew critical attention previously for their symbolic associations or sheer aesthetic resonance, whether that symbolism housed a semiotics of trauma or a Romantic appreciation of natural beauty. What has emerged more currently is a more holistic yet closer scrutiny and scientific survey of Woolf’s attention to nature and the sciences, a critical response that observes just how accurate Woolf’s use and application of science and nature was and is to her feminism and modernism, particularly regarding some of the contemporaneous debates involving evolution, the emergent fields of ecology and ethology, the academic institutionalization of the

Selected essay from the conference have been published in *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, ed. by Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman, (Clemson UP, 2011).

⁵⁴³ See especially pages 109-116 in Morrisson on “Environmental Science,” *Modernism, Science, and Technology*, Bloomsbury, 2016.

life sciences, and natural history as it transformed in the early 20th century into modern biology.⁵⁴⁴

So while Wolf the dog accompanies the fictional Rip Van Winkle up to the mountain where he drinks and slumbers, only to wake up twenty years later to an accomplished American revolution and a pet who doesn't recognize him, Virginia Woolf's dog *Flush* (1933), her fictionalized biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Cocker Spaniel, has been receiving far more critical attention as a Darwinian, evolutionary and ecological work of feminist literature, alongside Woolf's many fictional species of birds, hares, flowers, and foxes.⁵⁴⁵ This dissertation awakens pleasantly enough to these critical developments and evolutions, joining by affinity a substantial body of critical discourse underway that has discovered a veritable field of ecofeminist concerns in the works of Virginia Woolf.

Furthering the studies of Woolf and nature is the depth of recent critical attention paid to not just Woolf's contemporaneous reading of Classical Greek and absorbing critique of British Hellenism but the figures of Jane Ellen Harrison, Walter Pater, and other classical scholars with whom Woolf had abiding connections. My analysis of Harrison's "Evolutionary Hellenism" and its impact on Woolf benefits from what Jean Mills describes as the "transpersonal" bond between Harrison and Woolf as not a "...looking back, which is classicism, but a transforming forward of a particular version and interpretation of classicism into a feminist modernism."⁵⁴⁶ In the works of Mills and others in recovering the work of Woolf's "mentors," a strong resonance with the

⁵⁴⁴ See Morrisson, Swanson, Scott, and especially Alt on this newfound critical attention. Alt's chapters "The natural history tradition" and "The modern life sciences" in *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*, (14-71), are especially thoroughgoing on this point.

⁵⁴⁵ See, again, the many papers presented and published in *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, especially "Taking Her Fences: The Equestrian Virginia Woolf" by Beth Rigel Daugherty (61-70); "The Metaphysics of Flowers in *The Waves* by Laci Mattison (71-77); "The Woolf, the Horse, and the Fox: Recurrent Motifs in *Jacob's Room* and *Orlando*" (108-116) by Vara Neverow; "'The Bird is the Word'; Virginia Woolf and W.H. Hudson, Visionary Ornithologist" (133-142) by Diane Gillespie; "Evolution History, and Flush; or, The Origin of Spaniels" by Jeanne Dubino (143-150); and "'Lappin and Lapinova'; A Woolf in Hare's Clothing?" by Kathryn Simpson (151-56).

ecofeminist approach becomes apparent. What then critically bridges these studies of nature and classicism in Woolf—what I have similarly framed as the evolutionary “shifting” and classical “solid” queries of temporality and narrative structure that preoccupy Woolf and her dynamic, protean narrative processes—are the contemporaneous literary studies that engage the Pragmatists and “process” philosophers, especially William James and Henri Bergson whose philosophies were most responsive and formative to the “maelstrom of modernism.”⁵⁴⁷ Their regard for evolutionary theory, classical notions of the ideal and the absolute, and all the emergent, overlapping fields of psychology, physiology, and the new sciences inform Modernist notions of time, consciousness, language and, as a consequence, narrative configuration. This coda serves to briefly review some of the more recent critical studies that pertain to these fields.

***8.2 FROM THE PRIMITIVE TO THE PRIMORDIAL**

A good place to begin is with a tome that provides a general overview of Modernism and the more contemporary contributions to how we define the period and Woolf’s unique contribution to it. Framing my overall argument through Woolf’s own private musing from her 1931 diary entry, where she posed the question, “Now is life very solid or very shifting,” without definitively proffering an answer, was to exemplify in broad strokes Woolf’s continuous, self-conscious participation in the very act of what it means to be “Modernist.” While the framing as such does create the appearance of a binary choice, Woolf’s responses, both immediately in the diary entry and throughout her personal and public writings, resisted an either/or certainty so that Woolf’s metaphors engage in a manner that always favors processes over conclusions. I have argued that ontological and epistemological queries are both engaged in such searching images

⁵⁴⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Jane Ellen Harrison, and the Spirit of Modernist Classicism*, (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2014), p. 2.

and passages in Woolf, that questions of being become questions of time, and questions of time questions of being. This temporal fascination (and anxiety) Woolf shares with her most prominently studied contemporary Modernists has enjoyed a resurgence of interest, more precisely an enlargement of scope beyond the mere study of form or narrative experimentation with the received paradigms of time and space. Indeed, the hyperawareness of time, the invocation of a plurality of times and time-mindedness becomes a defining principal, sensibility, even *zeitgeist* of what it means to be Modern, even more so Modernist. Hence, Vincent Sherry introduces the prodigious expanse of material within the *Cambridge History of Modernism* (2016) by first rooting the time in the very term that defines the times—

So, *modo* enters into late antiquity as a most timely register of a temporality pressured by an immense sense of eventful change: a special present, a brink of time, a precipitous instant, all in all, a crisis time. These several associations move to the acutest register in the twentieth century through the addition of the suffix ‘ism,’ which adds a self-conscious awareness to this special experience of the ‘modern’ moment, turning the uncertainty of instantaneous time into not just a feeling but an idea, maybe even a faith or belief in this condition of constantly disruptive change.⁵⁴⁸

This “just now” of modernism transforms the “imaginative experience of temporality” beyond “one of crisis time to one of time itself in crisis,” a sensibility so pronounced that the plurality of Modernist movements and “isms,” informed as they are by major developments in disparate fields of the sciences, psychology, philosophy, art, music and architecture, among others, share this preoccupation: “these movements locate the action of modernism in a signal time, a signature tense—a present intensified with the sense of the break it is making from the past and

⁵⁴⁷ taken from Robert D. Richardson’s biography of *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism*. (Boston:

the breakthrough it makes to a future.”⁵⁴⁹ It by this rationale that Sherry not only introduces and argues for the primacy of this feature of modernism, this “temporal imaginary” that “dominates its consciousness,” but also indeed gives primacy to the thought in *The Cambridge History of Modernism* by placing “Modernism in Time” as the first of the compendium’s four parts.⁵⁵⁰

And it was for these corroborating reasons that my thesis lays such stress upon temporality as a foundational aspect of Woolf’s interpretation of the “solid and the shifting” in life as in fiction, whereby her moments of vision and being become metonyms for the brevity of life itself—a paradox nonetheless in how an instant of time approximates eternity without the consolation of eternal forms, the descent long and disappearing, the ascent uncertain and accidental, grown existential in the Darwinian accumulation and geological expansion of time. To this point, Sherry’s analysis of Thomas Hardy’s well-traveled phrase “the ache of Modernism” is most apt: “...the feeling Tess experiences in seeing a vision of days winding away in to a future that is at once infinite and diminishing, an eternity that is both meaningless and menacing. This is a vision of time future as time indeterminate, as time unblessed and unbound from the covenants of eschatology...”⁵⁵¹ Of the many chapters and contributions to Sherry’s *History*, within the “Time” section and without, two come to the forefront as essential to an enlargement of the arguments advanced in my thesis—one for its overview and the other for its more specific attentions to temporality. Tim Armstrong’s piece on the science, philosophy, and aesthetics of “Modernist Temporality” provides a substantial survey of the influences and concerns shaping Woolf’s more experimental designs for her fiction, whereas David Richards’ investigations of the “Primitive” in Modernism offer an entrance back into the ways Woolf’s

Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

⁵⁴⁸ *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, “Introduction,” Cambridge UP, pg. 2.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 & 21.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 21

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7

fiction marks a distinguishing difference, via gender and her Darwinian narrative gestures and temporal experimentations, from her masculinist contemporaries.

Armstrong's look at the Modernist temporal imaginary that "includes clockwise and counterclockwise movements" allows him to explore both "the master narrative of advance and a contrarian understanding of regression."⁵⁵² Behind this are the period's new developments and understandings of time and temporality derived from physics, mathematics, psychological investigations of a personal or human sense of time (à la James and Bergson), as well as advances in technology that gave us a heightened sense of mechanized time as well as the moving instants of the moving image. All this I've reviewed in this dissertation's introductory chapter, but what Armstrong further establishes is how these newfound senses of time often conflict or compete for authorial attention:

... Time can never easily be the abstract Newtonian continuum in the modernist text; it is discontinuous, interrupted, overloaded. As a result, the time of modernism is a matter of competing and often knotted accounts of what time is, whether we are considering individual temporal experience over the short or long term, or the collective shapes in time we call society and history.⁵⁵³

Part of this is anticipated by Ricoeur's analysis of time and narrative, which my dissertation employs and to which Armstrong also refers. Ricoeur's tension between "cosmic" time and "lived" time understands these competing temporal juxtapositions at the configuring site of narrative, and even the reconfiguration the reader makes in the very act of reading. But the plurality of times, especially the counterclockwise "regressive" as well as the the collective shapes of collective historical and social times, is worth considering more fully in relation to

⁵⁵² "Modernist Temporality: The Science and Philosophy and Aesthetics of Temporality from 1880," *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, p. 33.

Woolf. Indeed, equally important are how many competing aspects of temporality sprang between Modernist writers, scientists, and philosophers, the conflicting social and historical times defining in large part Woolf's timeframes as Modernist and feminist.

Part of what the recent ecological literary criticism raises is the widening schism between what categorizes nature and culture during industrial and urban modernization, and with it a concomitant schism between a time lived and synchronized to the rhythms of nature versus the increasingly mechanistic nature of time measured by clocks or, more jarringly, what Woolf likens to the speed of urban modernity "being blown through the Tube at fifty miles per hour."⁵⁵⁴ So Bonnie Kime Scott's study of Woolf and nature *In the Hollow of the Wave* finds inspiration in Donna Haraway's ecofeminist coinage of the compound noun "natureculture" to resist, blur or even bridge the schism altogether.⁵⁵⁵ If a linguistic gimmick, it still engenders a nomenclature to approach one significant manner in which Woolf differs profoundly by rhetoric and practice from most of the modernist contemporaries most often read alongside her—certainly any of the masculinist, militaristic tendencies of the "Men of 1914."

Consider the fascination with primitivism as a modernist imperative at the turn of the century as at once an aesthetic alternative to Western art as well as an imperialistic, colonial acquisition. David Richards explores how the "primitive," through occidental eyes, became a "catchall term comprising non-Western peoples and their cultural products"—a "turning away from 500 years of European art and a turning toward cultural others for renewal."⁵⁵⁶ From the Tahitian artifacts to the African masks that became the rage at exhibitions and world fairs across England and Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gaughin, Picasso, and a

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁴ "The Mark on the Wall," *Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, 84

⁵⁵⁵ See page 2 of Scott's "Introduction" to *In the Hollow of the Wave* as well as Mark S. Morrisson's *Modern, Science, and Technology*, p. 111. Haraway originally used this term in her book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, (Routledge, 2015).

⁵⁵⁶ "At Other Times: Modernism and the 'Primitive,'" *Cambridge History of Modernism*, 64.

whole host of Western artists and writers quickly inaugurated a new way of disturbing and renouncing the progressive teleology of Western art and bourgeois culture. Even as the Modernist turn towards the primitive was a “refutation of civilization’s dominate ideologies (capitalist, patriarchal, bourgeois),” the problem with such artistic renewal, as Richards argues, is an “imperialist discursive construct [that] drew upon and participated in the same assumptions and exotic fantasies of otherness” that rendered without distinction “an undifferentiated mass of peoples and cultures ranging from Africa to Oceana” in the same primitive state. The effect, in toto, left a multitude of cultures and civilizations “without history, cultural specificity, or agency”—the “loot of imperial theft” whereby “modernists mistook a colonial for a primitive subject.”⁵⁵⁷

Such cultural looting found perhaps its most influential acquisition and interpretation in Wilhelm Worringer’s seminal work *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), quickly absorbed and brought to England by Imagist founder T. E. Hulme as well as Woolf’s close friend, the artist and art historian Roger Fry. While such critical territory has been thoroughly traversed by Modernist critics⁵⁵⁸ and already alluded to in my introduction here, the attention and the attraction to the primitive in this relation to Woolf reminds us just how much Woolf remained particularly *unavailable* and *and even averse* to a primitivist aesthetic. To quickly review, Worringer’s “abstraction” derives from his own self-described state of “spiritual intoxication” after having been to the Trocadero collection of African masks in the spring of 1905. By abstraction, Worringer meant primitive, for the primitive artist does not hold a representative mirror up to nature but out of fear and terror of the natural world seeks to escape and control it—

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 65

⁵⁵⁸ Michael Levenson’s *Genealogy of Modernism* (1984) and Sanford Schwartz’s *Matrix of Modernism* (1985) certainly come to mind most prominently in this respect.

“In the necessity and irrefragability of geometric abstraction he could find repose”: “it was the only absolute form that could be conceived and attained by man.”⁵⁵⁹

This Worringer opposed to the empathetic Western tradition of art that progressively eschewed abstraction for a realism that ultimately led to a naturalization in art. “Naturalism’s empathy readmits space as the connectedness of all things...” and results in the “triumph of empathy over anguish.” It is quite clear where Worringer’s sympathies and sensibility lies, with primitivism achieving “this highest abstract beauty” and “purest regular art form.” The Western aesthetic derived from the “Greeks and other Occidentals” at the beginning of the twentieth century, Worringer argues, “...is nothing more than a psychology of the Classical feeling for art.”⁵⁶⁰

By the time T. E. Hulme has translated and applied Worringer’s thesis for English literature, the binary terms were “Romanticism and Classicism,” but with Classicism as the renewal of cold, hard, geometric lines and patterns Worringer and Hulme define as the primitive virtues, not watered down or obscured through a Romantic haze and its naturalized “psychology of the Classical feeling for art.” It signaled, again in Richards’ words, “a more comprehensive rejection of the values of rational humanism that underpinned Greek and Renaissance art.”⁵⁶¹ It was on or about 1910 that Hulme lectured on “Romanticism and Classicism,” right in time for Fry’s first Post-Impressionist exhibit in London that gave England the Tahitian paintings of Gauguin, among others, and followed it not just with the second Post-Impressionist exhibit in 1912 full of Matisse and Picassos but with his essay “The Art of the Bushmen.” Clive Bell, Vanessa Bell’s husband, wrote by 1914 that “...people who care much about art find that of the

⁵⁵⁹ qtd. in Richards, 72.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

work that moves them most the great part is what scholars call ‘Primitive’⁵⁶² With all of Fry’s, Hulme’s, and Worringer’s ecstatic praise for African art and contempt for traditional Western art, there are still the colonialist assumptions, leaving Fry curious as to why “...a people who produced such great artists did not produce also a culture in our sense of the word.”⁵⁶³ Woolf read Fry’s writings assiduously as well as Bell’s, close companions as they all were, and was certainly influenced by Fry’s theories and appraisal of art. What’s remarkable, then, is how limited Woolf’s appropriation of Primitivism is, the marked awareness she displays regarding the cultural assumptions of colonialism that Fry does not.

Take Hulme’s most famous delineation between classicism and romanticism in his essay of the same title:

Here is the root of all romanticism: that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress....One can define the classical quite clearly as the exact opposite to this. Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organisation that anything decent can be got out of him.⁵⁶⁴

What’s most always left out of any critical appraisal of Hulme’s influential categorization is the allusion to Darwin immediately following his two definitions, anticipating the counterargument that evolution as a theory refutes his claim of human nature as “fixed and limited” and “absolutely constant”:

This view was a little shaken at the time of Darwin. You remember his particular hypothesis, that new species came into existence by the cumulative effect of small

⁵⁶² As referenced in Richards, p. 74.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

variations—this seems to admit the possibility of future progress. But at the present day the contrary hypothesis makes headway in the shape of De Vries’s mutation theory, that each new species comes into existence, not gradually by the accumulation of small steps, but suddenly in a jump, a kind of sport, and that once in existence it remains absolutely fixed. This enables me to keep the classical view with an appearance of scientific backing.

Hugo de Vries’ mutation theory, introduced right at the beginning of the twentieth century (1901-3), seemed to offer Hulme an alternative to a gradually evolving principle of species formation by natural selection, setting humanity in a state that while, open to leaps at the rarest of occasions, provides cover for an almost immutable, largely static state of species formation that Hulme’s “classicism” requires.⁵⁶⁵ Indeed, Hulme took mutation theory further than de Vries himself, claiming humanity “absolutely fixed” once the species mutated into form. More essential is how Hulme negotiates nature, claiming “There must be just as much contact with nature in an abstract art as in a realistic one,” but limiting any heightened sense of naturalism to the “imaginative flights” of a misguided romanticism. Telling is that Hulme’s representative image of what this new classicism might strive towards is a steel spring bent *unnaturally*, “...represented by a man employing all his fingers to bend the steel out of its own curve and into the exact curve which you want. Something different to what it would assume naturally...I prophesy that a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming.”⁵⁶⁶ Taken just as technique, Hulme’s ideas propel “Imagisme”—Pound’s transference of Hulme becoming one of his most

⁵⁶⁴ Hulme, T. E. “Romanticism and Classicism by T. E. Hulme.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69477/romanticism-and-classicism.

⁵⁶⁵ Indeed, while de Vries’ own scientific research on plant specimens has been disproven, his “saltation” theory of evolution has been revisited by Stephen Jay Gould and others in the form of punctuated equilibrium. Not a dispute over whether or not evolution happens, it is the degree of time in which it happens, still in the millions of years. See Morrison’s chapter on “Life Sciences” in *Science, Technology, and Modernism*. For Hulme, it really is the “appearance of scientific backing,” well read as he was.

famous lines in “A Retrospect,” that “the natural object is always the adequate symbol.” Rather than aiming for the celestial heavens or the infinite in poetry, poets must be direct and immediate in their treatment of the objects before them.⁵⁶⁷

The larger impact, however, was more than a stripping of romantic haze from language and a renewal in the primitive. For all the celebration of the primitive in the arts, and the Worringer thesis that to live in most direct communion to wild nature inspires a fearful, abstracted opposition to it, the manner in which Romantic opposition manifests itself is inspired by something more than the poached African masks on display at the Trocadero. There is mistrust in a Romantic, or more specifically a Wordsworthian humanism that lets nature be its tutor, especially when that nature provides an often feminized and decadent lushness or spontaneous gush of feeling promising abundant recompense.

This is where Bonnie Kime Scott picks up and challenges this particular form of Classicism as it was espoused and promulgated by Hulme and his disciples—a cold, dry, abstract, urban, imperialist, patriarchal conception of Modernism, she will argue. Scott agrees that “Modernist rejection of nature came in part from the preference of classicism over Romanticism”:

Wyndham Lewis, T. E. Hulme, and Ezra Pound conjure up formless, dark, decayed manifestations of nature to condemn what they consider inferior forms of writing; these they associate with decadence and the feminine. Following the lead of Baudelaire, they turn toward urban settings. Science and mechanics, including engines of war, furnish preferred masculine metaphors.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ “Romanticism and Classicism by T. E. Hulme.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69477/romanticism-and-classicism.

⁵⁶⁷ Ezra Pound, “*A Retrospect*,” University of Illinois, www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/retrospect.htm. Originally published as *Pavannes and Divagations* (1918).

⁵⁶⁸ *In the Hollow of the Wave*, p. 14.

In searching for control over nature rather than commune, a severe misgiving of nature as envisioned either by Romanticism or Darwinism takes hold. Hulme's example of the steel spring bent unnaturally reinforces Scott's point—"Hulme's favorite texture of 'dry hardness' suggests that for him the best organism is a dead, or at least desiccated, one."⁵⁶⁹

In *Refiguring Modernism*, Scott had already articulated how Wyndham Lewis overwhelmingly agrees with Hulme's classicism but more self-consciously associates its opposite with not just Romanticism but a feminine decadence repulsive to men with Lewis' brand of art. In Scott's words, Lewis assigns "...masculinity and art to dry surface articulation and the feminine, as nature, to damp and chaotic depths of being."⁵⁷⁰ Later, as discussed in my first chapter here, this becomes a "jellyish diffuseness" antithetical to Hulme's hard, orderly manhandling of nature, and Lewis is not shy in attacking Fry, Woolf, and all associates of Bloomsbury in their "very dim Venusburg" overseen by Woolf the "introverted matriarch" and her "pretty salon pieces" that mean to be "brooding over a subterraneous 'stream of consciousness."⁵⁷¹ Towards the conclusion of his review of "Virginia Woolf" in *Men Without Art*, Lewis infamously mixes a considerable amount of metaphors to skewer Woolf and her "values of decay," parodying the feminine gush he associates with her standard contemporary Romantic decadence borne from Pater, Wilde, Swinburne, James, and Bergson: "treading upon a carpet of eggs," Lewis takes "the cow by the horns" to stand erect against this "suffocating atmosphere" after having felt "very much a fish out of water" in his attempts to drain all the bogs, swamps, and marshes of the feminine antithetical to a robust, masculine classicism.⁵⁷² Such diatribes that conflate women and nature—asserting the masculine prerogative to either control, subdue, or conquer it—are why Scott begins her analysis with Sherry Ortner's essay

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 15.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 16

title, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?”⁵⁷³ The primitive might rise to a masculine classical ideal, but a common, lingering critique was that the last vestiges of romanticism were mired by an effete feminism.

Ultimately, Bonnie Kime Scott finds that modernists “...also discovered the impossibility of rejecting the natural world,” and what makes Woolf such a powerful exemplar of the aesthetic “greening of Modernism” is “the satisfaction that comes with imaginative merger of human and nonhuman other—one of the basic tropes of ecofeminism.”⁵⁷⁴ This is indeed where recent studies of Woolf and nature, as well as the recent corresponding studies that pay great attention to the ardent debates and developments in philosophy, classical studies, and science at the beginning of the twentieth century, provide a new lens (or lenses) with which to see Woolf’s appropriation of such ideas in her aesthetic for fiction. Opposing the dry, hard surface, the marmoreal geometry many of her male contemporaries undertook in their modernist enterprises, Woolf instead resists such classifications altogether. I stated that Woolf remained markedly unavailable to the “primitive” aesthetic, yet she remained markedly *available* to the primordial and prehistorical at the same time, what I have argued as her Darwinian or naturalist perspective that evolved from evolutionary plotting in her early works to evolutionary form in her experimentations with temporality and structure. Scott’s clarification on this point is prescient:

I suggest that what oppresses Lewis [in Woolf] is not the matriarch but the air of inversion, a queering of sexuality as well as gender, scripted as unnatural (the fish out of water), and classically equated with death and decay. Lewis was right in identifying Woolf’s interest in depth and dampness, attributes associated with both death and

⁵⁷¹ *In the Hollow of the Wave*, 16-17

⁵⁷² *Men Without Art*, 139-140.

⁵⁷³ *In the Hollow of the Wave*, 14.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

primordial origins in her nature writing, and in her queering of both sexuality and expectations for the feminine.⁵⁷⁵

Indeed, what makes Lewis such a compelling foil to Woolf's aesthetic, vitriolic as it reads, is the very awareness of an aesthetics threatening and competing with his masculine, misogynistic imperatives. Scott insinuates that Lewis can be right for the most abhorrently wrong reasons, and it's worth noting how perceptive Lewis remains, not just in his scathing, personal account of Woolf in *Men Without Art* but in the earlier *Time and Western Man*. There, Lewis vehemently and incessantly brands his enemy as the "time-cult" of the age that Lewis cleverly situates as evolved from the aesthete belief in "art for art's sake" to the "jamesian" and "bergsonian" "*Time-for-Time's-sake belief*."⁵⁷⁶ All the "time-mind" of his age he reads as one piece, and any form of it, especially in a writer like Woolf who seems to incorporate all of it, is worthy of his ridicule and disavowal.

*8.3 WITHDRAWAL, EVASION, TAXONOMY, ECOFEMINISM

Lewis's extreme positions name so many enemies, not just to time-future and time-past but to the age at large, that his invectives read like a who's who of high modernism. Indeed, as Martin Puchner notices, "most of his later literary and political writings were violent indictments of [his own] earlier modernism."⁵⁷⁷ Such "rear-guard" attacks do serve as a contrarian force that effectively names some of Woolf's most significant aesthetic allies and narrative strategies. This is where, to move Scott's argument forward, "the queering" of both classicism and nature, as

⁵⁷⁵ *In the Hollow of the Wave*, 17-18.

⁵⁷⁶ *Time and Western Man*, (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), p. 11.

⁵⁷⁷ "The Aftershocks of Blast: Manifestos, Satire, and the Rear-Guard of Modernism," *Bad Modernisms*, ed. by Douglas Mao & Rebecca L. Walkowitz, p. 44. Puchner's assessment of Lewis's "rear-guardism" is indeed apt: "...caught between advancement and retreat, the rear-guard lacks room to move and thus engages in an endless and often disoriented back and forth, sideway maneuvers and feints, and often breaks off from the main corps to find itself alone and surrounded by enemies everywhere" (45).

well as “jamesian” and “bergsonian” time philosophy, find their alliance with Woolf. Lewis found the Hellenism of the “Naughty Nineties” and what followed an artificial hearkening back to the past due to the soft, “artificial” and “sexified” English reenactment: “The dialogues of Plato have not an alexandrian effluvia of feminine scent. . . . The psychological composition of the mind of such a philosopher as Socrates, or Democritus, showed no bias whatever such as you inevitably find in a Wilde or a Pater—that alexandrian enervation and softening of all the male chastity of thought.”⁵⁷⁸ The manly, heroic model of modernism, in other words, stands erect in Lewis’ mind against modern decadence, even though the “Athens of Socrates was notorious, as his dialogues witness, for what is (for us) the most obsessing sort of sex-cult.”⁵⁷⁹

In *Bad Modernisms*, two of the essays collected in the compendium assess how both Pater and Woolf offer refreshing alternatives to the “heroic” version of modernism that critic Heather K. Love avers “has been most consistently identified with modernism itself” despite the fact that “it made up only a fraction of the aesthetic production in the period.”⁵⁸⁰ By inverting the received model of heroic, classical poise and martial action, these two essays turn the accepted terms on their heads and read Pater’s aesthetic detachment and Woolf’s evasive style as positive, even heroic qualities. “Pater’s break with the future and with the hard and fast revolutionism of the modernists,” Love argues, has closely linked him to the “ills of aestheticism: political quietism, withdrawal from the world, hermeticism, nostalgia, a slack relativism, and the elevation of beauty above justice.”⁵⁸¹ This Love reads, in agreement with other critics before her, as the circumstance in which a gay man risked exposure and marginalization at a time that “witnessed the birth of homosexuality as a modern category,” a victimized fate Oscar Wilde of course experienced. The force of Love’s argument, however, is where she reads “withdrawal in

⁵⁷⁸ *Time and Western Man*, 15-16 & 35.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Pater not as a refusal of politics but rather as a politics of refusal....The key practices of such a politics—secrecy, the vaporization of the self, asceticism, and temporal delay—depart significantly from the modernist protocols of political intervention.”⁵⁸² Getting as many pulsations as possible out of a time suspended, to find beauty in repose and to withdraw into aesthetic appreciations were strategies Pater could employ to cease the march of a time bent on a violent progression. Pater’s refusal to dominate subversively fights against the domineering voices who inveighed against his aesthetic creed.

So, too, does Rebecca Walkowitz invert the common criticism levied against Woolf’s evasiveness and indirectness as narrative strategy. Walkowitz reminds us that

Decentering the first-person point of view, rejecting tones of comfort or confidence, risking indecency; arguably these are the principal hallmarks of modernist fiction.

Indeed, the tension between decent feelings and dissenting thought is crucial to Virginia Woolf’s writing and to the project of many early-twentieth-century artists who sought to imagine models of social critique that would resist social codification.⁵⁸³

Indeed, Walkowitz follows Edward Said’s line of thought in this context to see Woolf’s evasive practice as a form of “critical heroism” that resisted postures of imperialism and militarism by attending to the marginal, the invisible, and the unseen. Woolf purposefully excludes heroic or significant social episodes, from war to engagement to suicide, and rather gives primary attention to what fictional convention would dictate as minor and insignificant.

Jacob’s Room, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse* are examples of Woolf’s evasive strategy in action, but of particular usefulness to my work is her analysis of the suspension of classification and identification that dates back to one of Woolf’s very first narrative departures,

⁵⁸⁰ “Forced Exile: Walter Pater’s Queer Modernism,” *Bad Modernisms*, p. 15.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.* 27

“The Mark on the Wall.” E. M. Forster famously reviewed Woolf’s early short story by noting “good critics, especially of the academic kind, may think it insignificant. It has no moral, no philosophy, nor has it what is usually understood by Form. It aims deliberately at aimlessness.”⁵⁸⁴ Walkowitz then traverses the many critics who took Woolf’s aimlessness for an inability to direct her attentions to the serious concerns of novel writing, politics, the war, and even feminism. But this is precisely Woolf’s pointless point: “Refusing to classify a mark on the wall, Woolf’s narrator shows how intellectual speculation, because it thwarts compliance, resists the passivity of wartime.”⁵⁸⁵ What forms and frames the story, in this respect, is the suspension not just of time through the consciousness and thought processes of the narrator but of the great elision, when the context of the war is withheld until the very end—“Curse this war; God damn this war!” As varied and diverse as the stream of thoughts contained within the consciousness of the narrator, this is the only interruption to the thoughts themselves that the narrative allows through interruption (and conversation).

This, Walkowitz suggests, is “a story that considers directly what evasion evades....The disruption of the narrator’s thoughts about the mark makes the reader notice, really for the first time, that the story is trying to represent the experience of wartime thinking.”⁵⁸⁶ A 1917 reader would notice all the signposts of thought throughout the story that war is upon the mind of the thinker with the random assortment of history, precedence, heroism, patriarchy, and militancy—an assortment of thoughts one could read against the random acts that went into a war that could have been avoided and should have been evaded. The same can be said for the narrative of *Mrs. Dalloway*, especially at moments that inhabit the thoughts of the novel’s characters. The prime

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁵⁸³ “Virginia Woolf’s Evasion: Critical Cosmopolitanism and British Modernism,” *Bad Modernisms*, 120-121.

⁵⁸⁴ as quoted by Walkowitz, p. 124.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

example is Clarissa Dalloway's diffusion of self when thinking through what it takes to contract herself into a social being—"pointed; dart like; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives...."⁵⁸⁷ Here are a multiplicity of perspectives that must assemble for singleness of purpose, such as a call to arms requires, and yet the narrative itself and the words that carry it float upon a mist and haze of contested meanings, the most famous metaphor of communion when Clarissa Dalloway's reverie derives satisfaction in thinking herself surviving like a mist among the trees, "a mist between the people she know best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself."⁵⁸⁸ Compared to Dr. Bradshaw's treatment of Septimus and his ideology of "proportion" and his quick classification not just of Septimus's symptoms but of his ultimate judgment of the suicide as "cowardly," there is a politics and an aesthetic purpose to Woolf's evasion. In Walkowitz's words,

evasion reflects Woolf's commitment to the multiple, transient self, as opposed to the contracted, marmoreal self required by proportion, conversion, and triumphalism. Woolf contests the war by rejecting its models of attention; she approaches the war parenthetically, never erasing its violence, but not allowing violence to absorb, in the total attention violence demands, the partial attention that resists it. (138)

In such a manner can we read both Pater and Woolf's anti-heroic impulses that also share a stake in Modernist claims of difference, an alternative political consciousness and temporal awareness

⁵⁸⁷ *Mrs. Dalloway*, p. 37.

⁵⁸⁸ *Mrs. Dalloway*, 9.

that, “resisting the politics of imperialism, as well as the politics of marriage and epic masculinity, may involve refining or even at times rejecting some kinds of attentiveness.”⁵⁸⁹

This, Walkowitz binds to a “modernist cosmopolitanism,” as the title of her essay suggests, and yet its import can be carried quite persuasively to Christina Alt’s and others’ exploration of *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*. Walkowitz omits that right after the “mark” on the wall is classified and the attentions of the narrative redirected, the second speaker curses the war and then immediately identifies the mark as a *snail*. As my chapter on Woolf’s “Tales of the Snail” argues, that shell houses a whole natural history of meaning. The ecological dimension and Darwinian timeframe envelops the wartime attentiveness and marks the snail’s natural place in space.

Mark S. Morrison’s overview in *Modernism, Science, and Technology* relays how the last decade of criticism regarding nature study, ecocriticism, and ecofeminism works, in principle, to break down the a nature/culture binary that in literary studies dismisses “nature and the natural world” and favors studies “attuned to the mechanical and technological, the commercial and the urban” while neglecting how “The city, of course, does offer an environment and nature enters there.”⁵⁹⁰ Indeed, Morrison suggests that Woolf has taken a central position in these studies in large part “because she is seen as a kind of ecofeminist avant la lettre. From the conception of holistic order evident in Woolf’s texts, to her interest in breaking down species barriers, even in Woolf’s focus on goddess figures and reappropriation of ‘classical and pagan myths to explore the ideas of balanced and sustainable order’, Woolf is shown as, essentially, a modernist ecofeminist.”⁵⁹¹ The greater insight in Christina Alt’s work is that Woolf doesn’t need to be read as a “proto-ecofeminist” or her writings treated as “a prescient anticipation of late twentieth- and

⁵⁸⁹ *Bad Modernisms*, 142.

early twenty-first-century views.”⁵⁹² Prescient Woolf is, but this is better read “through reference to Woolf’s contemporary scientific context. Ecology emerged as a recognised scientific discipline in Britain during Woolf’s lifetime” as well as ethology, the study of animal behavior as a biological field. Along with theories that were attempting to reconcile Mendelian genetics with Darwin’s evolutionary theory, “the disciplines of ethology and ecology gained institutional status and brought about a return to fieldwork with a new focus on the observation of living organisms in their natural environment.”⁵⁹³ Especially prescient in Alt’s study, regardless, is how her close reading of Woolf and the taxonomic tradition of natural history parallels my own regarding Woolf’s Victorian childhood preoccupations with entomology and lepidoptera, but Alt carefully considers this in the context of the paradigm shifts underway in British science and society at large regarding taxonomic practice and classification. This, too, from quite different starting points, is where we find a significant confluence of ideas from Love and Walkowitz’s *Bad Modernisms* in the readings of a politics of evasion and withdrawal that decenter the self.

The new early twentieth biological studies of ecology and ethology were displacing the nineteenth century taxonomic tradition that derived from the international rage to name, classify and codify new specimens borne of the Linnean classification system. Alt’s chapter on “The natural history tradition” traces how the same nineteenth century “golden age of natural history collection,” where small collections of a hundred, or at most a few thousand species, grew to the millions. It is impossible to underestimate the significance of Carolus Linnaeus and how his system of classification was a great advance in scientific systemization, making it practicable for amateur naturalists and a Charles Darwin alike to survey plant and animal species with a

⁵⁹⁰ see *Modernism, Science, and Technology*, p. 112, as well as Scott’s “Ecofeminism, Holism, and Natural Order” in *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, p. 5.

⁵⁹¹ *Modernism, Science, and Technology*, p. 112.

⁵⁹² *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*, 9.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

grandeur and breadth unimaginable before him. The veritable rage and popularity of taxonomy, however, and such species hunting for the sake of collecting and naming, did have its detractors. From as early as Gilbert White, the very late eighteenth century prototype of the clergyman-naturalist whom both Leslie Stephen and Virginia Woolf read with admiration, to William Henry Hudson, the early twentieth century naturalist, ornithologist, and writer whom Woolf in her essay “Modern Fiction” gathered in her pantheon along with Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad as the writers whom modern writers should give “unconditional gratitude⁵⁹⁴,” there was a strong push to make classification subservient to the observation of plants and animals in their natural environments—in short, the early ecological and ethological models.

What Alt carefully analyzes is how taxonomy, natural theology, and imperialism go hand in hand—“taxonomy was the ruling preoccupation of the period... a direct outcome of colonial expansion and consolidation” that emphasized stability and control, finding in the collecting and systemization “the existence of order and hierarchy in the natural world” most often “justified through reference to the doctrine of natural theology.”⁵⁹⁵ The alignment with Paley’s natural theology explains how the practice and science became culturally accepted, “promoted as a religiously orthodox and morally edifying activity” (24). What’s fascinating is how Woolf’s childhood pursuits, late Victorian to be sure but post-Darwinian by date, are still tracked along the lines of a natural history taxonomic culture, even through the books the Stephens acquired from Jack Hills on butterflies and moths and bugs that still, sometimes covertly, advocated natural theology and eschewed evolutionary theory. Indeed, the great mid-Victorian popularizer of natural history, the Reverend F. O. Morris, whose books Woolf sifted through in her role as

⁵⁹⁴ see “Modern Fiction,” *The Common Reader*, 147. Indeed, though Woolf qualifies her praise of Hudson in relation to Conrad and Hardy, reserving that gratitude in “a much lesser degree” than the other two, his significance to Woolf in relation to her Darwinian experimentation with form and temporality, along with Hardy and Conrad, has yet to be studied in a manner it deserves. See also Diane F. Gillespie, “The Bird is the Word”: Virginia Woolf and W. H. Hudson, Visionary Ornithologist,” *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, 133-142.

specimen identifier in the Stephen Entomological Society of her youth, was adamantly opposed to evolution and sought to “negate the new theories [on evolution] through silence.”⁵⁹⁶ Woolf’s traditional Victorian upbringing then had natural history, sugaring, bugging, botanizing—a taxonomic classifying system as a natural by-product of Woolf’s intellectual upper class culture that included the Arnolds and Macauleys as well as the Hookers, the Huxleys, and the Darwins.

Alt then compares this Victorian taxonomic model of Woolf’s childhood to the ecological model she begins employing in her fiction, where the naturalist’s perspective that I have introduced as formative to Woolf’s early experimental works can be seen as operating quite scientifically under the new ecological model. Alt’s chapter on “Literary experimentation and scientific analogy” makes this quite explicit, looking at the same works like “Reading,” “Kew Gardens,” and “The Mark on the Wall” to offer this distinction. In the same manner that Walkowitz reads “the Mark” and other fictional instances as narrative technique that evades the the “contracted, marmoreal self required by proportion, conversion, and triumphalism” by “rejecting its models of attention,” Alt sees from the ecological lens that once the snail was classified in the story, the narrative comes to an end: “The story as a whole can be read as a deferral of classification, and conclusive categorization is presented as inimical to the creative process.”⁵⁹⁷

Instead, on numerous occasions, Woolf proffers an alternative model, her creative process and experimentation also evolving from this natural history, this new ecology that merged with her feminism. Even, say, Woolf’s most famous essay on fiction and the creative process, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” can then be seen in light of the new sciences. Mr. Bennett and other “materialists,” in their obsession with classifying and categorizing, treat Mrs. Brown as a

⁵⁹⁵ Alt, p. 20.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 30-35.

specimen to be caught— “My name is Brown. Catch me if you can.” She still “escapes him” though the Georgians in all their forms have been in “pursuit” of Mrs. Brown.⁵⁹⁸ Rather than pinning down the butterflies of fiction until they dimly folds their wings and die, Woolf advocates observation in a natural environment, even protection and preservation.

*8.4 VAGUENESS, THE LINGUISTIC TURN, PRAGMATISM, AND PROCESS

Woolf’s radio piece “Craftsmanship,” broadcast on April 20th, 1937, becomes the culminating voice Alt uses to juxtapose the nineteenth century taxonomic approach to the early twentieth ecological approach, in this instance where words and language itself are portrayed as if living organisms. Not by happenstance, “Craftsmanship” becomes an important piece of writing for Megan Quigley’s equally fascinating study of Woolf’s importance to *Modern Fiction and Vagueness*. “Craftsmanship” is not a work I had considered in relation to my thesis beforehand, but studies that situate Pragmatism and the “process” philosophy squarely at the center of Woolf’s thinking allow me to do so. Alt recognizes the evolutionary overtones of this discussion of the nature of language, where Woolf “presents words as animate organisms in constant motion and interaction with one another,” mating and propagating, adapting and surviving, “living in the mind.”⁵⁹⁹ Woolf’s belief in language’s capacity for “adaptation,” Alt argues,

ensures both their own survival and their ability to represent accurately the conditions of the time, place, and consciousness in which they exist, ‘so that they survive, so that they create beauty, so that they tell the truth.’ If this is the nature of words, Woolf suggests,

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 171.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 176-79.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 189-90.

then writing is not a process of capturing, classifying, and arranging words for display but rather one of observing and recording the behavior of words.⁶⁰⁰

“Craftsmanship” in this sense for Alt becomes a final working treatise of how Woolf draws upon evolutionary theory, ecological principals, and close naturalistic observation that suggest her alternative to the “taxonomic approach” of the writing process.

Megan Quigley’s use of the radio broadcast takes this argument into the great philosophical debates and queries animating the early twentieth century Pragmatists against the voices of Bertrand Russell and other idealist, absolutist philosophies. Indeed, Quigley pivots from the ecocritical, phenomenological and scientific approaches to Woolf by noting how the former have convincingly “argued that Woolf consistently dissolved the boundaries between self and nature in her fiction.” Gillian Beer and Louise Westling in particular have argued that Woolf’s “ecological humanism” indeed applied quantum physics, as well as “radical ontological and epistemological perspectives” because of how well accorded they are “with her own lifelong awareness of the indeterminacy of consciousness.”⁶⁰¹ What Quigley’s study of *Modern Fiction and Vagueness* contributes to this conversation is a query and challenge posed by Patricia Waugh:

Noting that William James is the ‘key source for the current anti-Cartesian turn in psychology, cognitive science, philosophy of mind and social thought,’ Waugh writes, ‘the terms and expression of Woolf’s preoccupations resonate so closely with James’s, that one wonders why the similarities between their two enterprises have been so

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶⁰¹ *Modern Fiction and Vagueness*, Cambridge UP, 2015, p. 69.

conspicuously ignored.’ My work aims to take up Waugh’s challenge in order to resuscitate Woolf’s thinking in the context of William James’s influence.⁶⁰²

Indeed, not just in Quigley’s but in many recent studies, William James, Bergson (as ally), and other philosophers in the Pragmatist camp have come back to the forefront in relation to Modernism and Modernist literature, participating in the larger debate that Darwin’s theory inaugurated between the mutability and immobility of forms—not just in the variations of forms via species but language itself. Megan Quigley goes so far as to view Woolf’s famous manifestic image of the “semi-transparent envelope” on the same Pragmatic grounds I do, but with more depth and breadth of texts supporting her from both the Platonic and the Pragmatic camps. It makes a compelling argument against Ann Banfield’s assertions that placed Woolf’s literary approach as prominently inspired by Moore and Russell, and avers that Woolf embraces the “Philosophy of the Vague” championed by William James, Henri Bergson, and the Pragmatists over the intellectualism, idealism, and absolutism of Moore, the early Wittgenstein, and Russell. Quigley’s argument finds further support in a profoundly innovative way via Michael North’s *Novelty: A History of the New* (2014). There, the absolutist and pragmatic debates pick up how evolutionary theory was the most monumental paradigm shift not just of the nineteenth but also the scientific studies on consciousness and language informed by it in the twentieth century. William James, C. S. Pierce, F.C.S. Schiller, and Henri Bergson garner attention from North for their focus upon the novel adaptations of consciousness and the creative, nebulous spontaneity of language. It is in this context that both Joan Richardson’s *A Natural History of Pragmatism* (2007) and Robert D. Richardson’s *William James: In the Maelstrom of Modernism* should be read alongside Woolf, as a bridge between the Platonic solids and the Darwinian shifts these

⁶⁰² “When in December 1910?; Virginia Woolf, Bertrand Russell, and the Question of Vagueness,” *Modern Fiction and Vagueness*, p. 69.

early twentieth century philosophers espoused against Platonic absolutism in all of its manifestations and most prominent practitioners.

Joan Richardson's *Natural History of Pragmatism*, in fact, draws special attention to the Jamesian idea that thinking itself is a life form, "subject to the same processes of growth and change as all other life forms," and studies how language theory was in part a model for Darwin's theory, as he relays in *The Origin of Species*. Darwin thought about fossils in relation to living species after thinking about the way "Grimm or Bopp looked at dead languages" and found it "hard to use an inherited language with inherited ideas to discover something original."⁶⁰³ Darwin speculates that a classification such as performed on animal and plant species via natural history would, when applied to languages, give us a genealogy that is "...strictly natural, as it would connect together all languages, extinct and modern, by the closest affinities, and would give the filiation and origin of each tongue...descended from one species."⁶⁰⁴

One important contribution Quigley, in fact, makes is how substantial the question of "the vague" is in philosophy not only at the turn of last century but of this century, citing Richard Rorty's dubbing of it "the linguistic turn" in philosophy and ushering in "the heyday of the fuzzy."⁶⁰⁵ By introducing Russell and Woolf as friendly sparring partners in letter and conversation and ultimately in pitting Russell's lecture on "Vagueness" against Woolf's "Craftsmanship," Quigley brings clarity to Woolf's hazy negotiations of semi-transparency. As my chapter on "The Aesthetics of Semi-Transparency" establishes, Russell was an early and frequent critic of Pragmatism, in no small part because of its origins in Darwin's evolutionary theory and the assault it makes on truth as a logical or intellectual proposition that in Russell's

⁶⁰³ *Natural History of Pragmatism*, 1 & 92-95.

⁶⁰⁴ As referenced by D. Richardson in *Natural History*,. 92.

mind exists beyond the subjectivity of knowing. From responding to the question of vagueness in Dewey's *Essays in Experimental Logic* in 1918 to his lecture entitled "Vagueness" in 1922, Russell looks to find an ideal language *without vagueness*, "a formal language and symbolic system, one that could approximate a mathematical formula." James's "embrace of the vague" and call for "the reinstatement of the vague" back into psychology and philosophy taxed Russell to no end, and Russell emphasized in every way possible that "The process of sound philosophizing, to my mind, consists mainly in passing from those obvious, vague, ambiguous things, that we feel quite sure of, to something precise, clear, definite, which by reflection and analysis we find is involved in the vague thing that we started from, and is, so to speak, the real truth of which the vague thing is just a shadow."⁶⁰⁶ If language fails to obey logical principles, it ought to, as the world still obeys his logical laws.

Quigley indeed suggests that Woolf's "Craftsmanship" is a wry response to Russell's attempts at creating a brand new, ideal language unavailable to the shadows of imprecise meaning. Russell's language, as in any taxonomic or systematic classification of language, is a dead language, whereas a living language exercises a "democratic" spirit one might closely align not just with the Darwinian but the pragmatic. This Woolf brings home at the conclusion of "Craftsmanship":

Perhaps that is [words'] most striking peculiarity — their need of change. It is because the truth they try to catch is many-sided, and they convey it by being themselves many-sided, flashing this way, then that. Thus they mean one thing to one person, another thing to another person; they are unintelligible to one generation, plain as a pikestaff to the next. And it is because of this complexity that they survive. Perhaps then one reason why

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, ix-x.

⁶⁰⁶ Russell's essay qtd. in Quigley, 71.

we have no great poet, novelist or critic writing to-day is that we refuse words their liberty. We pin them down to one meaning...And when words are pinned down they fold their wings and die.⁶⁰⁷

We “murder to dissect,” Woolf might say as Wordsworth did before her, and what Woolf praises and esteems about language, where its truth value is to be had in this vague, nebulous region of associations, is precisely what Russell wants excised from the process to arrive at the ideal product.

Another valuable speculation Quigley makes in this respect is that Katharine Hilbery in *Night & Day* can be read as an exemplar of Bertrand Russell’s belief in the precision of mathematics, Woolf’s narrative suggesting it as well, almost contemporaneously when the question of the “vague” was at the forefront of Russell’s thoughts and writing: “How infinitely [Katharine] preferred the exactitude, the star-like impersonality, of figures to the confusion, agitations, and vagueness of the finest prose.”⁶⁰⁸ When we remember that Katharine’s grandfather is the eminent poet “Richard Alrdyce,” the very fictional model of Romanticism, Katharine’s resistance to the vague obfuscations of language and feeling comes as natural enough rebellion and reaction formation. Katharine hates poetry, hates novels, even hates Shakespeare and prefers “those abstract ideas—figures, laws, stars, facts...”⁶⁰⁹ It is indeed Quigley’s reading that the whole novel, in some sense, is a rant against Romanticism and its vagaries that then is reconciled by novel’s end when the figure of Mrs. Hilbery must reinsert the language of Romanticism into their romance. It is a Romanticism that must merge as well with the very modern idea of human communication and connection that allows for imprecision, the modern sensibility where words are “pieced together in a laborious and elementary fashion,

⁶⁰⁷ The final paragraph of “Craftsmanship,” as qtd. by Quigley, missing the last several sentences.

⁶⁰⁸ *Night & Day*, p. 34.

fragments of belief, unsoldered and separate, lacking the unity of phrases fashioned by the old believers.”⁶¹⁰ In so doing, Katharine’s presence still raises many associations in Woolf’s narrative with classical Greece, not least her enthusiasm for the Elgin Marbles, and Quigley muses that “It could be Katharine, rather than Woolf, who writes in her essay ‘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.’”⁶¹¹

In this way Quigley and the other recent readings of Woolf cited here come full circle back to the parameters of Classicism and Romanticism as Woolf came to engage them on her own terms. The allusions to “semi-transparency” in Woolf of course come from her essay “Modern Fiction,” where Woolf argues that life is not like a series of “gig lamps symmetrically arranged.” Rather, it is a “luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.”⁶¹² Quigley and also Lorraine Sim, in an essay that traces many of these patterns in Woolf’s writing as Platonic, notice that even Woolf’s symbols and images that would suggest permanence almost inevitably suggest this blurred edge of circumference. Ralph in *Night and Day* draws his fictional semi-transparent envelope to symbolize life in all its vagary: “It represented by its circumference of smudges surrounding a central blot all that encircling glow which for him surrounded, inexplicably, so many objects of life, softening their sharp outline...situations wearing a halo almost perceptible to the physical eye.”⁶¹³ Mary Datchet, too, an uncanny mirror to Katharine in the way Septimus is to Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway*, carries with her a conception of some visible form, “...a conception of the scheme of things in which, as a human being, she must have her share. She half held a vision; the

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 431-32.

⁶¹¹ *The Vague in Modern Fiction*, 84.

⁶¹² *Common Reader*, 150.

⁶¹³ *Modernism and Vagueness*, 86; *Night and Day*, 420.

vision shaped and dwindled.”⁶¹⁴ Sim’s essay that threads together, in an equally uncanny way, many of the same passages I have in my exploration of the Platonic, Greek Ideal in Woolf’s writing, reminds us that Woolf, like Pater before her, was attracted most to the flux of sensations and experience in her mimetic acts of language. And yet, for the selfsame reasons, she sought out those moments, shocking and memorable, that seemed to strike into stability some permanence in memory that she would feign call clarity, a Greek clarity that nonetheless partook of Heraclitean flux, of William James’s stream of consciousness, Bergson’s *durée*, Darwin’s long perspective. Quigley puts it well when she notes that “Woolf’s ‘philosophy’ simultaneously yearns for such a reality and questions it, just as her depictions of multiple perspectives are always subordinated to a distinctive style that undermines a decisively objective point of view.”⁶¹⁵ Her language will not be pinned down, fold its wings and die.

It performs very much, in fact, the way Michael North explores “novelty” and the new in evolutionary terms. Evolution itself, he avers, performs like a kind of language, which is why he delights in the root of evolution as *evolutio*, the unfolding or disclosing and reading of a scroll to full length. Evolution, as the ultimate paradigm shift for novelty in the world, works through a symbiosis between recurrence and recombination, a subtle combination of Platonic recollection and Aristotelian recurrence.⁶¹⁶ Darwin’s insight in this respect was that it was a newness always circumscribed within the limits of the old in the same manner that change and continuity lie closely together in twentieth century thought. What attracted a William James and a Woolf to evolution, in its essence, was what repulsed Hulme and others. It was what Julian Huxley described as “the realization of ever new possibilities,”⁶¹⁷ whether they be for language, narrative

⁶¹⁴ qtd. in Sim, “Virginia Woolf Tracing Patterns through Plato’s Forms,” p. 39.

⁶¹⁵ *Modern Fiction and Vagueness*, p. 68.

⁶¹⁶ See North, pg. 8, on “symbiosis between recurrence and recombination”; and then Chapter 3: “Darwin’s Renovation of the New,” 61-83.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

form, or a new way of inscribing the feminine and a politics liberated from patriarchy, imperialism, war, and fascism.

This said, Darwin's revolution, North argues, is an "open circle" where the classical paradigms of form and function gather but remain open to change. Species might change, but change requires a deep sense of an open future, of time and of history. It is "a model of change that tended to approach stability."⁶¹⁸ Woolf looked most for that type, that species of stability, in the Greek literature and Greek ideal that opened wide to the evolutionary principles espoused by her deep reading not only of Plato but of Walter Pater and Jane Ellen Harrison. These studies of Pragmatism remind just how much James, Dewey, Schiller, and of course Bergson, among others, *immediately* gravitated towards the ramifications of evolutionary theory for philosophy, and in so doing gloried in the gaps of intellectual fervor and debate over idealism and theories of the absolute that had as their pattern and anchor a reverence for Plato and a belief in Platonism.

***8.5 AN ECOFEMINIST HELLENISM**

This, then, is the final turn I'd like to review in conclusion to this Coda—the depth of recent works related to Woolf's Greek studies and critique of British Hellenism that circles back to the models of ecofeminism. They engage Woolf's Hellenism in the same manner my thesis has suggested. Theodore Koulouris's well informed and researched *Hellenism and Loss in the Works of Virginia Woolf* (2011), as well as Frank Turner's definitive, field-establishing tome on *The Greek Heritage in Victorian England* (1981), I have already employed generously in my fifth chapter here on "The Victorian Inheritance of the Greek Ideal" in the early works of Woolf. As it pertains to Plato, significant additions and missed opportunities of inclusion in my previous chapter include the compendium *Platonism and the English Imagination* (1996), which traces the

influence of Plato and the Neoplatonists in English literature from the Middle Ages through to the Twentieth Century, as well as two essays on Plato and Woolf that augment my discussion of Platonic form and Woolf's Greek studies.⁶¹⁹ Then there are the feminist studies that relate to Virginia Woolf's "Greekness" and the gathering critical attention paid to Jane Ellen Harrison, from T. D. Olverson's *Women Writers and the Dark Side of Late Victorian Hellenism* (2009) and Mary Beard's biography *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (2002) to most recently Jean Mills' *Virginia Woolf, Jane Ellen Harrison, and the Spirit of Modernist Classicism* (2014). The depth of these studies gives impetus to the idea that Woolf's fascination with classical Greece and the Platonic dialogues was, as I averred, not a passing or feint enthusiasm. When closer scrutiny is paid to the intricacies of Woolf's personal relationships to classical scholars and Greek tutors, as these studies have in attending to not just Harrison but Janet Case (Woolf's longest tenured Greek tutor but a scholar in her own right), Professor G. C. Warr (who taught Woolf in the Women's Education program at King's college), Woolf's cousin J.K. Stephen (who acted alongside Harrison in Greek revival plays), and contemporary classicist scholar Eugenie Sellers, among others, a portrait of just how forceful, fashionable, prominent, and intense the study of Greek was in late nineteenth and early twentieth century in English culture and education. Indeed, the educational reform of the classical tripos and compulsory Greek at Cambridge and Oxford parallels the gradual access to Greek studies and important popular translation of Greek classics to women and the working classes of England. This enriches Woolf's complex inheritance of the Greek ideal and incorporation of it into her fiction as a significant aspect of her feminist modernism.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.* 73.

⁶¹⁹ *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. by Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge University Press, 1996); C. Armstrong, "Why Phaedrus? Plato in Virginia Woolf's novel *Jacob's Room*," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 11; 108-125; "Virginia Woolf Tracing Patterns through Plato's Forms," *Journal of Modern Literature* 28: 38-48.

Most important, I would argue, are the attentions paid to Jane Ellen Harrison as mentor and muse to Woolf. The ecofeminist approaches to Woolf have profitably reread this relationship. While ecofeminism as a term dates to the 1970s, the emergence of it in literary criticism really dates to the publication of *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* in 1998 and has only surfaced prominently in Woolf studies this last decade. The issues ecofeminism raises regarding issues of social change—forms of oppression including sexism, racism, colonialism, and non-humans—often run parallel and connect to the exploitation of nature. It seeks, even aspires to the nature of these issues as open to possibility and change, of a paradigm shift on par with the evolutionary principles of relations that provide it a scientific backdrop and understanding. In Diane Swanson’s estimation, a broken dualistic worldview that inevitably places man in dominion over not just woman but nature has been a major cause of our failure to address ecological problems. “We have become so distanced that we must learn once again to see, hear, and feel the rest of nature and to imagine the nonhuman as connected to us and ourselves as part of the natural world.”⁶²⁰ In Scott’s assessment, “Ecologists and ecofeminists are most concerned with the ways that humans, particularly powerful ones seeking control, have manipulated natural conditions to favor their own perceived needs, goals, and superiority, usually to the detriment of non-human beings, less dominant peoples, and the female gender.”⁶²¹

In picking up the argument of ecofeminism, my ambition is not, grand as Swanson charges hers to be, to use Woolf as a means to “help us today in our quest to develop the non-anthropocentric and non-androcentric understandings of the world necessary to changing human behavior towards the other-than-human world.”⁶²² Alt’s approach to read Woolf into the early twentieth century ecology of her times, it seems to me, is much more apt and therefore impactful

⁶²⁰ “The Real World: Woolf and Ecofeminism,” *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, 25.

⁶²¹ *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, 4.

in making Woolf our contemporary. The ecological and feminist lenses, however, do bring together these disparate fields of interest. In Chapters Five and Six, I touched upon Harrison's importance for Woolf in providing an "Evolutionary Hellenism" that allowed Woolf, following Harrison's own trajectory as a scholar, to move from the Platonic, Olympian, marmoreal, and masculine Greek ideal to the chthonic, Eleusinian, "matrilineal" and pre-Socratic idea of Greek myth and ritual. In Bonnie Kime Scott's words, "Woolf reappropriated classical and pagan myths to explore the ideas of balanced and sustainable order. She focused on female figures, young and old, situated in direct relation to earth and water."⁶²³ Woolf fascinated in evolutionary theory, in the Darwinian thought that constructed a destiny independent of human beings and yet included them without insisting upon their centrality. It and the philosophies that proposed the pluralities of time and the vagaries of language gave Woolf free imaginative play to the possibility of form and language that would help her envision a narrative less androcentric, yes, but sometimes even less anthropocentric in its appreciations of nature. The importance of Jane Ellen Harrison in this field remains that a cultural feminism persists, and rather than it somehow being an essentialist negative construct that equates nature with women or female deities, Harrison pushed *Themis* and a matrilineal descent as the deeper, truer Greek ideal and religion, because it was grounded in the ritual acts of community and nature. Harrison's work on "primitive" rituals were an important alternative to Woolf's sense of the past, as it located that primitive in the Western tradition, a female one at that, rather than the English colonial present that more narrowly saw the British Empire as an inheritance of the glory that was Greece.

Wyndham Lewis, inevitably the ready contrarian to all thoughts positive to Woolf's evolutionary and feminist sensibilities, nonetheless understood early and often what Woolf and

⁶²² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

other Modernists with feminist leanings were attempting through the influence of Jane Ellen Harrison and other archaeological approaches to his cherished classicism. In one of his shortest essays from *Time and Western Man*, not three pages long, he lists “The Naughty Nineties” as essentially “archaeological and historical” and opposed to the “‘culture’ gospel of Arnold and the piled up Victorian “scientific materialism” that in its place raised up the “idealism of the Greek World”; soon afterwards comes “Feminism...a revolution that aims at reversing the respective positions of the sexes, and so *returning* to the supposed conditions of the primitive Matriarchate.” Then comes “the world of science, sociology, psychology” directed at “some sort of *return to the Past*. ...Freud’s teaching has resuscitated the animal past of the soul, following upon Darwin, and hatched a menagerie of animal, criminal and primitive “complexes” for the Western mind. All these approaches stress *the Past*, the primitive, all that is *not* the civilized Present. There is no revolutionary theory or movement that does not ultimately employ itself in bringing to life ghosts, and putting the Present to school with the Past.”⁶²⁴ This, for Lewis, was unacceptable because it brought the romance of the past into the present, and his classicism required a clean break.

Ultimately, what Lewis never fully appreciated in the “time-cult” of the age, especially in the guise of Woolf, was how Woolf utilized the present, a tunneling process backed by the past, to usher in a narrative whose point wasn’t a complete disruption or break from the past. Like the idea of evolution and its dependence upon continuity as much as change, what makes Woolf remarkable for her time, —for any time and for the plurality of times she imagined—is how she sought renewal in the primordial as much as the Platonic, embraced a time and a literature bent on change even as she employed patterns of unity and design that might best be aligned to the ideal or the Platonic. It shows a Virginia Woolf far more deeply interfused in the sciences than

⁶²⁴ from “The Return to the Primitive” in *Time and the Western Man*, 34-35.

had been previously thought or allowed, analogously similar to the studies that have meticulously explored Woolf reading's of classicism and incorporation of British Hellenism for the uses and advantages of a feminist modernism. The past two decades of literary criticism and development emphasize further how the accumulation of time has only allowed for an evolution of thought to catch up to the changing lineaments of her form.

Let me also just add, as a parting aside, how gratifying it was to see, quite by surprise, my own work referenced and quoted by Bonnie Kime Scott in *In the Hollow of the Wave*, not from this dissertation that of course hadn't been published but from that same paper at the 2003 International Virginia Woolf Conference, where I first proposed an aesthetics of semi-transparency that had Darwin as an origin. It is thrilling to think that the seeds of an idea, one that slept for nearly two decades before this dissertation came to fruition, still found soil in Scott's important work further afield. Rip Van Winkle, indeed, in how my Sleepy Hollow became part of hers.

Footnotes

¹ January 4, 1929, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III*, (1924-1930), ed. by Anne Olivier Bell, assisted by Andrew McNeillie (New York: HBJ, 1980) 218.

² In breaking Woolf's writing career into three periods, I follow Carolyn Heilbrun and Molly Hite, but perhaps with different emphasis upon the periods. The first period ranges from 1906-1917, which includes her earliest short stories up through the writing of *Night and Day*. The middle period begins in 1917, with the writing of her first experimental short stories, *Kew Gardens* and *Mark on the Wall*, and concludes with *The Waves* in 1931. The last period stretches from 1932-41, when Woolf, in Heilbrun's estimation, began to deal more explicitly and directly with the social status of women, "to cross her self-drawn line between art and propaganda."

³ *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 3: (1919-1924)*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (HBJ: 1988) 33.

⁴ *The Common Reader: First Series*, edited and introduced by Andrew McNeillie, (New York: HBJ, 1984) 32-33.

⁵ *Ibid.* 150.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "Modern Novels," 33.

⁸ "Modern Novels," *Essays of Virginia Woolf Vol. 3*, 35; "Modern Fiction," *Common Reader*, 153.

⁹ "How it Strikes a Contemporary" (1923), *Common Reader*, 236.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 238-9.

¹¹ I refer of course to Woolf's essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," and the line "On or about December 1910, human character changed." The tone in Woolf is jocular and the assigning of the date obscure. But her dating, I believe, is cumulative, based on multiple events in 1910: the Post-Impressionist exhibit put together by Roger Fry, the ascension of George V, the death of Florence Nightingale, the Conciliatory Bill put before Parliament for the enfranchisement of women, and the elections of December 1910 that gave Asquith's Liberal Party the power to create the January 1911 Parliamentary Act that could severely curtail the power of the House of Lords.

¹² In Hulme. *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*. ed. Herbert Read. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1936) 113-40.

¹³ This position is evident throughout Lewis's entire oeuvre, but the position is most explicitly laid out in *Time and Western Man* (1927).

¹⁴ *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, (Harvard UP, 1983).

¹⁵ See Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space*, Ch. 1: "The Nature of Time".

¹⁶ See Stevenson's chapter "Time" in *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*, (University of Kentucky Press, 1992), specifically 113-153.

¹⁷ Kern, "The Nature of Time." Henri Bergson's famous metaphor of the intellect's apprehension of time as approximate to the cinematograph occurs first in *Creative Evolution*,

- 1910.
- 18 *Ibid.* 15-19.
- 19 September 21, 1908
- 20 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon, An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*. trans. Edward Allen McCormick. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962). See also Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," reprinted in *The Widening Gyre; Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature*, (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963) for his discussion of Lessing's influence on viewing the arts spatially or temporally in criticism, particularly its influence on the pictorial arts.
- 21 *Time and Narrative, Vol. 2*, trans. By Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 8-9.
- 22 Woolf knew both Moore and Russell personally through the Cambridge group introduced to her by her brother Thoby. Their influence was significant on Woolf and all early Bloomsbury writers. Ann Banfield discusses the content of this debate and its relation to Woolf thoroughly in her book *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000) as well as in other essays, including "Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse*," *Modernism/Modernity* 7.1 (2000) 43-75. Some issues raised by Banfield will be discussed in the ensuing chapters.
- 23 Qtd. in Randall Stevenson's *Modernist Fiction* (112) from Frederic Jameson's *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (London: University of California Press, 1979) 123-124.
- 24 *Time and Narrative, Vol. 3*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 89-90. 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Culture of Time and Space*, 38. Kern borrows the phrase from Joyce's *Ulysses*.
- 27 Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf, Second Edition, ed. by Susan Dick (New York: HBJ, 1985) 84
- 28 *The Origin of Species*, Ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Gillian Beer (New York: Oxford UP, 1998) 231. 29 *M Notebook* (1838), #84
- 30 *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000) 10. Her emphasis.
- 31 (New York: HBJ, 1981) 105.
- 32 *Ibid.* 111.
- 33 *Ibid.* 72.
- 34 *To the Lighthouse*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1927), p. 35.
- 35 *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995) 21.
- 36 "And Darwin Says They Are Nearer the Cow": Evolutionary Discourse in Melymbrosia and The Voyage Out," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 37, Issue 1 (Spring, 1991) 1-21, p. 1.
- 37 "*Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 38 Spencer's influence on Social Darwinism will be discussed in Part II.
- 39 *A Room of One's Own* (New York: HBJ, 1981) 31. See, Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin*

Voyaging (New Jersey: Princeton UP) 191-210. One anecdote in particular is illustrative: It has been argued that the voyage of the *HMS Beagle* transformed Darwin from a gifted observer and collector of nature into an analytical thinker of theoretical brilliance, but it almost ended for Darwin well before he landed upon evolutionary theory. When the young Darwin refused to agree with Captain Fitzroy that slaves seen in Brazil were well-treated and happy, Fitzroy went into a tirade so ugly that only a consequent apology prevented Darwin from abandoning ship. Browne's biography navigates exceptionally well between Darwin's Victorian cultural assumptions as a land-owning gentleman and his extreme revulsion of slavery and the undercurrents of empire-building.

⁴⁰ Darwin himself, it is well documented, was deeply troubled by some of the social and political implications possible from his theory by means of natural selection.

⁴¹ See Beer's introduction to *The Origin of Species* as well as *Darwin's Plots*, both cited above. See also George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1988).

⁴² Lambert, *Twentieth Century Literature*, p. 3.

⁴³ For example Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, translated by Margaret Waller, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984; Pamela Caughie's "Introduction" to *Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2000); Jane Marcus's *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987); and Bonnie Kime Scott's *Refiguring Modernism*. Vols. 1-2 (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995)

⁴⁴ *Darwin's Plots*, 5.

⁴⁵ Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," reprinted in *The Widening Gyre; Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature*, (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963); Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending; Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2000). Also see Hugh Kenner's chapter "Space-Craft" in *The Pound Era*, which examines the spatialization of Modern literature, especially Flaubert, Pound, Eliot, Lewis, and Joyce. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971) 23-40.

⁴⁶ (London: Blackie, 1962) 69

⁴⁷ "Virginia Woolf and English Culture" (Paris, 1977), first English version in *Virginia Woolf*, ed. Rachel Bowlby (London: Longman, 1992) 48.

⁴⁸ "Tragic time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and to the *Lighthouse*," *Modernism/Modernity* 7.1 (2000) 43-75.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Carolyn Heilbrun, *Towards Androgyny: Aspects of Male and Female in Literature* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1973); Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1973); Elaine Showalter, 'Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny,' *A Literature of Their Own*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977); Toril Moi, *Sexual/ Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985).

⁵⁰ Molly Hite, "Virginia Woolf's Two Bodies," *Genders* 31 (2000), 27 August 2006.

⁵¹ McLaurin, *Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved* (New York: CUP, 1973). See also David Dowling's *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf*, (London: Macmillan, 1985); Mariana Torgovnick, *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence and Woolf*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), Jane Goldman, *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse, The Waves* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998) and *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1998).

- ⁵² Ann Banfield's essay (see above), Holly Henry, *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Mark Hussey, *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986).; Harvena Richter, *The Inward Voyage* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970); and the most exhaustive study of Plato in Woolf, Brenda Lyons, *Textual Voyages: Platonic Allusions in Virginia Woolf's Fiction*, Thesis, Balliol College, University of Oxford, Trinity, 1995.
- ⁵³ *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), especially the essay "Virginia Woolf and Prehistory," p. 6-29. Beer's landmark work, *Darwin's Plots* (1983), incidentally, is the essential study of evolutionary narrative in nineteenth century fiction, without which this thesis would have been substantially diminished.
- ⁵⁴ *Time and Narrative, Vol.1-3*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; 1984; 1988)
- ⁵⁵ *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000)
- ⁵⁶ Introduction, *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, ed. by Mark Hussey (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1991).
- ⁵⁷ Heilbrun, Carolyn. "Plenary Session: Carolyn Heilbrun interviewed by Smith College Provost Susan C. Bourque" The Thirteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf: "Woolf in the Real World," 6 June 2003, Wright Hall Auditorium, Smith College.
- ⁵⁸ Woolf's term, first recorded in her diary discussion of John Milton on Sept. 10, 1918: "He deals in horror & immensity & squalor & sublimity, but never in passions of the human heart. Has any great poem ever let in so little light unopened own joys & sorrows?....He was the first of the masculinists...." *Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977), p. 193.
- ⁵⁹ Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism Vol. 1-2* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995).
- ⁶⁰ *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*, Gillian Beer, (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. Press, 1996), pp. 6-28.
- ⁶¹ "Ultimately" because Christian theology had long appropriated Platonic forms as a precursor to the perfect teleology of God's eternal form.
- ⁶² July 25, 1926, *Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 3, ed by Anne Olivier Bell (New York: HBJ, 1980) 100.
- ⁶³ *Ibid* 36.
- ⁶⁴ See *Philosophical Studies*, (London, Routledge, 1922), where Moore sets out to dispute James's claim in *Pragmatism* that "truths are mutable" by distinguishing between "ideas" and "words". 134ff
- ⁶⁵ See *Sowing; An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904*, New York: HBJ, 1960) 129ff.
- ⁶⁶ *Two Memoirs: Dr Melchoir: A Defeated Enemy and My Early Beliefs*, intro. by David Garnett (New York: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949) 81-105.
- ⁶⁷ See, for example, Virginia Woolf's "Old Bloomsbury," *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, (New York: HBJ, 1985) 189ff. ⁶⁸ See, for example, Martha C. Carpentier, *Ritual, myth, and the modernist text: the influence of Jane Ellen Harrison on Joyce, Eliot and Woolf*.

(Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1998.) Patricia Malka, *Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Jane Harrison's Con/Spiracy*. Studies in Modern Literature (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987); Jane Marcus, "Taking the Bull by the Udders: Sexual Difference in Virginia Woolf—A Conspiracy Theory." *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁶⁹ *Time and Narrative, Vol. 1*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 52. Ricoeur analyzes Book 11 of the *Confessions*. ⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 23.

⁷¹ TN 1, 76.

⁷² *Time and Narrative, Vol. 2*.

⁷³ TN 2, 102.

⁷⁴ TN3, 90.

⁷⁵ TN3, 91

⁷⁶ See *To the Lighthouse*, where Mrs. Ramsay knits herself into "losing personality," p. 63; also Bernard's final, protracted monologue in *The Waves*, p. 287. Woolf uses anonymity as a value in both *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* and becomes more and more attracted to the idea in her later diary entries.

⁷⁷ TN2, 97

⁷⁸ Christopher Reed, "Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics," *Virginia Woolfed*. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004). *Bloom's Literary Reference Online*. Facts on File, Inc. This is Reed's account of the early Bloomsbury aesthetic, which he argues evolved after WWI in an "attempt to reintegrate representation into the formalist paradigm without sacrificing an ideal of purely aesthetic experience."

⁷⁹ *Time and Narrative Vol. 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 9-10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 10.

⁸² *The Sense of an Ending; Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2000) 116.

⁸³ TN 1, 60. It should be noted that Ricoeur's use of the term "poet" is generalized to all narrative creators, taking his cue from Aristotle's *Poetics*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 54-64.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

⁸⁶ Wednesday 14 January, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. Two 1920-1924* (New York: HBJ, 1978) 7.

⁸⁷ James's metaphor for Milly in his "Preface to the New York Edition of *The Wings of the Dove*."

⁸⁸ There are several examples, most recently Adam Gopnik's *Angels and Ages* (2009).

⁸⁹ The title of Browne's second book of her biography on Darwin.

⁹⁰ Consider, for example, that Woolf begins her "Modern" chapter with the sentence, "It was time to go indoors."

⁹¹ "Virginia Woolf and Prehistory," *The Common Ground* 9.

- 92 *Melymbrosia* 279.
- 93 *Ibid.* 280.
- 94 *The Voyage Out* 308.
- 95 *Melymbrosia* 279.
- 96 *VO* 309.
- 97 *Ibid.*
- 98 *VO* 311.
- 99 March 12, 1939, "E Notebook" *Charles Darwin's Notebooks* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1987) 114.
- 100 *VO* 311-12.
- 101 *Ibid.* 310.
- 102 *VO* 311-12.
- 103 *Ibid.* 321.
- 104 *VO* 311.
- 105 *VO* 315.
- 106 *VO* 316.
- 107 *Ibid.*
- 108 See *Modern Novels*, for starters, where Woolf gives Conrad (and Thomas Hardy) her "unconditional gratitude" over any of her contemporaries or immediate living predecessors. Woolf wrote several essays on Joseph Conrad's fiction during this time period, and mentions him often in her diaries. More on this to come.
- 109 *Heart of Darkness*, ed. with intro. By Ross C Murfin (New York: Bedford, 1989) 76.
- 110 *VO* 320.
- 111 *Ibid.*
- 112 *Ibid.* 332.
- 113 *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, IV*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: HBJ 1981) 231. ¹¹⁴ *Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. II*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell, (New York: HBJ 1980) 13-14.
- 115 *Night and Day* 312 ¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- 117 *Ibid.* 312-313.
- 118 314.
- 119 "Virginia Woolf's Two Bodies" *Genders* 31 2000, 3.
- 120 *VO* 319.
- 121 *Night and Day*, ed. by Julia Briggs (New York: Penguin, 1992) 254.
- 122 "Virginia Woolf's Two Bodies" 6-7.
- 123 *N&D* 255.
- 124 *Ibid.* 281
- 125 *N&D* 280-282
- 126 "Virginia Woolf's Two Bodies" 12.

- 127 *N&D*, 281
- 128 From Briggs's "Introduction" to *Night and Day* (New York: Penguin, 1992) xxx.
- 129 *Night and Day* 288.
- 130 *Ibid.* 282.
- 131 *Ibid.* 282.
- 132 *Letters 4*, 231.
- 133 "An Unwritten Novel" was begun in January, 1920.
- 134 "Mark," most likely, was written first in order, as it was the first story Woolf published and typeset for The Hogarth Press in July of 1917. Katherine Mansfield mentions and flatters "Kew Gardens" in a letter of August 15, 1917, and a manuscript of "Kew" survives that is dated August 7, 1917. See Briggs, *An Inner Life*, 63-65. "Kew" was first published in 1919, illustrated with Vanessa Bell's woodcuts, so it was likely revised and rewritten as well.
- 135 *Night and Day* 281.
- 136 *Ibid.*, 282.
- 137 "Modern Novels" (1919), 33
- 138 *Ibid.*
- 139 *Ibid.* 35
- 140 "Modern Novels, *Essays II*, 33. Emphasis mine.
- 141 See <http://www.kew.org/heritage> for a more thorough account of Banks' contributions to Kew and botany. Also see <http://www.nceas.ucsb.edu/~alroy/lefa/expeditions.html>.
- 142 Kew Gardens as it is now known was started in 1759 by Princess Augusta, the mother of King George III, on a nine-acre site around Kew Palace, but English royalty had been frequenting there much longer: <http://www.kew.org/heritage>.
- 143 Endersby website of JD Hooker: <http://www.jdhooker.org.uk>. Owens was able to retain the British Museum collections, but by the turn of the century, Kew Gardens was the major botanical garden of the British Empire.
- 144 14 January 1844 Burkhardt and Smith 1987 2
- 145 *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (Harcourt Brace, 2006) 65.
- 146 *Diary I* 82.
- 147 "The Correspondence of Flaubert," *Essays in London and Elsewhere*, 1893, 123. Flaubert's letter reads, in French: "Madame Bovary n'a rien de vrai. C'est une histoire totalement inventée ; je n'y ai rien ni de mes sentiments, ni de mon existence. L'illusion (s'il y en a une) vient au contraire de l'impersonnalité de l'oeuvre. C'est un de mes principes, qu'il ne faut pas s'écrire. L'artiste doit être dans son oeuvre comme Dieu dans la création, invisible et tout puissant ; qu'on le sente partout, mais qu'on ne le voie pas." 148 *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Chester G. Anderson. New York: Penguin Books, 1977, p. 315
- 149 from "On Rereading Novels" (1922), a review of Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction*. Lubbock's book champions the formal mastery of Flaubert and James over their predecessors. Lubbock gave Woolf much to consider and oppose in developing a design of her own.
- 150 *Essays III*, 340.
- 151 This criticism of Joyce is complex and varied. Certainly one facet of Woolf's published and

personal criticisms of Joyce stems from anxiety that Joyce was primary to her efforts in a similar vein. There is also the question of taste: Joyce's focus upon "indecenty" was not to her liking, but Woolf's larger argument against Joyce, even in her espoused appreciations of his accomplishment, centers on the question of "egotism," a writing confined ultimately by its being "centered in a self" ("Modern Novels").

152 Qtd. From *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick. New York: Harcourt, 1989. pg. 90-95.

153 *CSF*, 90

154 *CSF*, 92.

155 *CSF*, 94.

156 *CSF*, 92

157 *CSF*, 90-91

158 *CSF*. 92.

159 *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*. See in particular her concluding chapter, "The Biocentric Tradition in Context."

160 *Night and Day*, 281-2.

161 *Ibid*.

162 Woolf could, in fact, be echoing the famous passage in Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Life of Bee* (1901), Chapter 21 on "The Swarm;" where he describes bees as "the soul of the summer, the clock whose dial records the moments of plenty." The word "drone" derives from the drone bee, the male non-working bee. Its association with the sound of the bee, as catalogued in the OED, is later, but in common usage by the 16th century.

163 *Leviathan* (1651), "Introduction."

164 *Ibid*.

165 See, for instance, the many speculations upon the origin of the volute in architecture in *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building: Biographical, Historical, and Descriptive*, by Russell Sturgis (London: Macmillan, 1905) 303. Vitruvius famously laid out the orders of classical architecture that have been in common vernacular usage since the Renaissance.

166 For an interesting and thorough account of this, see Denise Andrey and Mirko Galli, "Geometric Methods of the 1500s for Laying Out the Ionic Volute" *Nexus Network Journal*, Birkhäuser Basel, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2004, 31-48. They study the methods of Sebastiano Serlio, Giuseppe Salviati and Philandrier for laying out the Ionic volute as it was described by Vitruvius. Salviati in particular used Euclid's *Elements* in an attempt to reconcile the shape to its geometric principles (what is often called the Archimedean Spiral).

167 *Night and Day*, 282.

168 This would certainly bolster Ann Banfield's assertions that much of Woolf's aesthetics derives from the philosophical studies of Bertrand Russell. Woolf visited Greece in 1906 with her sister Vanessa and her brother Thoby. More on this to come.

169 Whitehead and Thompson were in fact very close friends going back to their undergraduate years at Cambridge; see C. D. Broad's eulogy: "Alfred North Whitehead (1863-1947)" *Mind*, Vol. 57, No. 226 (Apr., 1948), pp. 139-145.

170 *On Growth and Form*, D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, ed. by John Tyler Bonner. (New

York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 7

171 *On Growth and Form*, 5.

172 *Ibid.*, 7

173 “D’Arcy Thompson and the Science of Form,” *New Literary History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Form and its Alternatives (Winter, 1971), pp. 229-258.

174 *On Growth and Form*, 269.

175 Oxford English Dictionary, “Evolute,” Online Edition March 2009.

176 Illustration taken from <http://curvebank.calstatela.edu/index/involutecircle.jpg>

177 Syamadas Mukhopadhyaya and then Alfred Knesler proved the mathematical theorem in 1909 and 1912 respectively.

178 The evolute of an oval: “Thus one couple after another with much the same irregular and aimless movement passed the flower-bed and were enveloped...”(95). Illustration from <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/EllipseEvolute.html>. This second volute by Venetian painter Giuseppe Salviati, published in 1552, and used to recreate the Ionic volutes of Greek architecture. Here, illustrated by Denise Audrey and Mirko Galli in their study, “Geometric Methods of the 1500s for Laying Out the Ionic Volute” (36).

179 Decartes first described the mathematical properties of the logarithmic spiral, but it was Jacob Bernoulli who studied its properties extensively, fascinated by the maintenance of shape while ever increasing in size: thus, he coined the term *Spira mirabilis*.

180 65.

181 Woolf also describes how she wrote *Mrs. Dalloway* “as the oyster starts or the snail to secrete a house for itself. And this it did without any conscious direction...it was necessary to write the book first and to invent a theory afterwards.” (“Introduction’ to *Mrs. Dalloway*,” *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*, ed. by Francine Prose, New York: Harcourt, 2004, pg. 12). In *The Waves*, Woolf inverts the simile so that the first appearance of a snail in the interludes of that novel has a “snail shell rising in the grass like a grey cathedral, a swelling building burnt with dark rings...” (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959) 74.

182 *Growth and Form*, 187-189.

183 *Jacob’s Room*, 64-65.

184 67.

185 *JR*, 68-9

186 *JR*, 66-69

187 Again, I allude to “Modern Novels” of 1919, *E2*, 33-34.

188 Virginia Woolf wrote three essays specifically on Thomas DeQuincey: “The English Mail Coach” (1906) was one of her earliest and longest essays, of course on DeQuincey’s essay by that title. “Impassioned Prose” was 1926, and one of her best critical essays, essential to read in relation to *To the Lighthouse* (some of the notes for and writing of the essay are actually found in her TTL manuscript). The essay was one of her personal favorites. “DeQuincey’s Autobiography” (1932), her last on him, first published in *The Second Common Reader*, considers all his writing as autobiographical, and praises his ability to suggest an emotion rather than state it through the writing itself that builds up wave upon wave until it becomes complete.

DeQuincey is also discussed in Woolf's essay "On Being Ill" as one of the few writers who relates literature to the body, particularly sickness, rather than a literature that only maintains that its concern is with the mind. I agree with Hermione Lee, Andrew McNeillie, and others that he is an indispensable resource for Woolf, as important as a Walter Pater.

189 "Impassioned Prose," *Selected Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by David Bradshaw (New York: Oxford UP, 2008) 60-61.

190 Qtd in *The Second Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, 1932) 138.

191 The section Woolf excises between the two passages is interestingly enough on the loss of DeQuincey's sister Elizabeth, on the arresting power of grief but also the creativity of it. While not relevant here, the space left out, the absence, is an important place to look for DeQuincey in Woolf. Certainly Woolf would be attracted to his writings on the loss and memory of parent and sibling, made more involute by DeQuincey also being one of Julia Stephen's favorite authors.

192 CR2, 138. Woolf quotes a few more sentences on revisiting childhood memories.

193 Indeed, this seems to be Woolf's intention not just because she wrote the two stories successively but because she pairs them together at the very end of her first published collection of short stories *Monday or Tuesday*.

194 CSF, 85-6

195 "Rewriting Nature," *New Yorker*, October 23, 2006, p. 59. Gopnik has substantially revised this essay and included it as a chapter in his book on Lincoln and Darwin entitled *Angels and Ages* (2009).

196 This also recalls Walter Pater's "Conclusion" in the *Renaissance* and Herbert Spencer's philosophy, both of which will be discussed in an ensuing chapter.

197 CSF, 84.

198 *Ibid.*

199 *Ibid.* 84-5

200 "The Narrow Bridge of Art," *Granite and Rainbow* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958) 12.

201 TN3, 90.

202 *Ibid.*, xxx.

203 279

204 *Ibid.* 281.

205 This is Paley's argument in the very influential *Natural Theology* (London, 1802).

206 Many critics have noticed this painterly quality and commented upon the influence of Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, and perhaps Cezanne and the Post-Impressionist exhibits that Fry brought to England in 1910 and 1912.

207 CR2, 139.

208 *Ibid.*

209 from "Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1925) 149.

210 "DeQuincey's Autobiography," CR2, 138.

211 "Impassioned Prose," *Selected Essays*, 61.

212 "Rewriting Nature," *New Yorker*, (Oct. 23, 2006) 59.

- 213 See, for instance, Woolf's essay "Moments of Vision" (1918).
- 214 *VO*, 194-195.
- 215 *CSF*, 89.
- 216 *The Interrupted Moment: A View of Virginia Woolf's Novels* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).
- 217 *CSF*, 87-8.
- 218 *Ibid*, 87.
- 219 *Ibid*.
- 220 *CSF*, 117.
- 221 *Virginia Woolf* 397-398.
- 222 *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* (New York: HBJ, 1950) . 151. 223 *Ibid.*, 157.
- 224 See especially "The Elizabethan Lumber Room" in *The Common Reader*, where passages about the Elizabethan explorers and Sir Thomas Browne are taken almost verbatim out of "Reading."
- 225 156.
- 226 157.
- 227 *Ibid*.
- 228 *Ibid*. 158-159.
- 229 *Ibid*.
- 230 *Ibid*.160-161.
- 231 *Ibid*.
- 232 163.
- 233 *Ibid*. 163, 175. See also Woolf's essay "On Not Knowing Greek."
- 234 173.
- 235 *Ibid*.
- 236 *Ibid*. 174-5.
- 237 175.
- 238 171.
- 239 164.
- 240 164-167
- 241 "Modern Novels" *Essays* III 35.
- 242 *Virginia Woolf*, 398.
- 243 *Ibid*. 101-104
- 244 *Moments of Being*, p. 104. Francis Morris wrote popular natural history field books on the histories of British butterflies and moths. See Schulkind's footnotes, p. 104.
- 245 *Ibid*. 104
- 246 *A Passionate Apprentice*, p. 5.
- 247 *Ibid*, p. 131.
- 248 *Ibid*, 139.

- 249 *Moments of Being*, 104.
- 250 *A Passionate Apprentice; The Early Journals 1897-1909*, ed. by Mitchell A Leaska (New York: HBJ, 1990). Especially see 141ff.
- 251 Stephen to Mary Fisher, 23 March 1902, qtd. in *Virginia Woolf*, Hermione Lee, (New York: Knopf, 1997), p. 115.
- 252 *Ibid.* 136.
- 253 see *A Passionate Apprentice*, 5-142.
- 254 *Ibid.*, 141.
- 255 "Reading," 167-168.
- 256 Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin: Voyaging* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 101.
- 257 *Ibid.*
- 258 David Allen Elliston *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History* (Princeton UP: 1978) 142.
- 259 Elliston, 133.
- 260 *Ibid.*
- 261 This historical overview is mostly culled from "The Peppered moth: decline of a Darwinian disciple," delivered to the British Humanist Association, at the London School of Economics, on Darwin Day, 12th February 2004. <http://www.gen.cam.ac.uk/Research/Majerus/Darwiniandisciple.doc>. For a full account of the natural history of the peppered moth, see Michael Majerus's *The Peppered Moth: Evolution in Action* (1998).
- 262 Elliston 142-144.
- 263 Browne 101-102
- 264 *Ibid.* 102.
- 265 *Browne*, 102.
- 266 qtd. in "The Lives of the Obscure," *Common Reader*, 128.
- 267 I am indebted to Julia Briggs for this connection to Fabre. See *The Inner Voice*, p. 241.
- 268 *The Inner Voice*, 241-250.
- 269 Diary III, Sept. 1929
- 270 "Hunting the Moth: Virginia Woolf and the Creative Imagination," *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity*, ed. by Ralph Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) p. 13-28.
- 271 *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (New York: HBJ, 1970).
- 272 "A Sketch of the Past," *MOB*, 124
- 273 *Ibid.*
- 274 *MOB*, 49-50. 275 *Ibid.* 105.
- 276 *Ibid.* 124.
- 277 *Ibid.* 51.
- 278 *Ibid.* 136. Specifically, Woolf mentions 1897-1904, from Stella's death to her father's.
- 279 *A Passionate Apprentice* 112-131.
- 280 Forty years later, Jack Hills, who had been out of Virginia Woolf's life for decades save the

chance meeting in public, sent Woolf a present: a mounted specimen of a death's head moth. When he died five months later, he restored Stella's legacy and bestowed it to the remaining Stephen children whom he had taught to sugar trees.

281 *Moments of Being*, p. 137-8.

282 *Ibid.* 137.

283 *Ibid.* 71.

284 71-72.

285 *Ibid.* 79.

286 *MOB* 65.

287 *Ibid.* 66.

288 *Ibid.* 70-71.

289 5 November 1901, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I* (HBJ: New York, 1976) 45.

290 A term coined by Robert Milder to define the authorial process of transforming autobiography into fiction.

291 *MOB*, 72.

292 *MOB*, 72, 142.

293 *MOB*, 142.

294 *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* 168-169.

295 *Ibid.* 169.

296 *MOB* 72

297 *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (Columbia: Ohio State University Press, 1986) 97. ²⁹⁸ *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 90-95, 88-89.

299 *The Common Ground*, 9.

300 *Mrs. Dalloway*, 58, 8-9.

301 *The Singing of the Real World*, 151-2

302 Wallace Stevens' line, "Death is the mother of beauty," from "Sunday Morning."

303 "Reading," 169.

304 *Ibid.* 179.

305 "Tragic Time," 61.

306 *A Passionate Apprentice*, 175.

307 *Ibid.*, 176.

308 Several of Plato's dialogues make this argument for universal or ideal forms. See, for instance, *Parmenides* and the *Phaedo*. ³⁰⁹ from *Timaeus*, 37c-e, Jowett translation.

310 "On Not Knowing Greek," *The Common Reader*, 27.

311 *Ibid.*

312 *CR*, 23.

313 *CR*, 27.

314 "Reading," 178-9.

315 *CR*, 32

- 316 CR, 38.
- 317 “*Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*, Gillian Beer, (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. Press, 1996) 6-28.
- 318 “Modern Novels,” *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (New York: HBJ) 33.
- 319 *Ibid*.
- 320 *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick. (New York, HBJ, 1989), p. 63.
- 321 *Refiguring Modernism, Volume Two: Postmodern Feminist Readings of Woolf, West, and Barnes*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott, Indiana UP, 1995, p. 178.
- 322 “Greekness” is Theodore Koulouris’ term for Woolf’s multifaceted brand of Hellenism. Koulouris closely examines just about every aspect of Woolf’s Greek studies and writes, “Woolf’s Greekness resists clear-cut and finished formulations; suggesting that it was this or that would not do justice to its inherent complexity and persistent multi-facetedness.” *Hellenism and Loss in the Works of Virginia Woolf*, Vermont: Ashgate e-book, 2011, p. 5.
- 323 *Moments of Being*, ed. and with an introduction by Jeanne Schulkind (New York: HBJ, 1985), p. 181-201.
- 324 *Ibid*, 185-91.
- 325 *Ibid*, 125.
- 326 Woolf’s studies in Greek have been explored often, but her use of Plato nowhere more extensively than in Brenda Lyon’s thesis, *Textual Voyages: Platonic Allusions in Virginia Woolf’s Fiction*. Thesis, Balliol College, University of Oxford, Trinity, 1995. Future references to Lyons will be cited in text.
- 327 “22 Hyde Park Gate,” *Moments of Being*, 2nd ed., ed. by Jeanne Schulkind, (New York: HBJ, 1985), pp. 149-151.
- 328 February 2, 1905, *A Passionate Apprentice; The Early Journals 1897-1909*, ed. by Mitchell A Leaska (New York: HBJ, 1990), p. 228.
- 329 An essay that, sadly, has been lost.
- 330 Thoby contracted Typhoid fever on the trip, returning to London on October 21st while Virginia and Vanessa visited Constantinople. It was misdiagnosed as pneumonia. By November 20th, Thoby was dead.
- 331 See S.P. Rosenbaum’s definitive analysis of the biographical sources of the story in *Charleston Newsletter* No. 19 (Sept. 1987), 23-32.
- 332 *Greece* had been added to the famous Karl Baedeker travel book series in English by 1889.
- 333 *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 64. In Woolf’s journal account of the ascent of Pentelicus, the epithet given to the Greek charges, when they initially attempted to not go all the way to the summit, is even less flattering. Woolf writes, “So English oath and Greek oath beat the air fruitlessly; for the Greek could not understand the Epithet ‘squint eyed monkey’ nor could we interpret the vigor of his language; Greek we reflected is devoid of meaning.” (*Passionate Apprentice*, 323.)
- 334 *Ibid*, 65.
- 335 *Ibid*, 64.

336 *Ibid.*
337 68.
338 67-68
339 from Pater's "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*.
340 68.
341 Opening sentence and page of "Phyllis and Rosamond," *Shorter Fiction*, 17.
342 *Ibid.*, 27.
343 *Ibid.*, 26-27.
344 28.
345 24.
346 *Ibid.*, 24-25.
347 *Ibid.*, 25.
348 *Ibid.*, 28.
349 from "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown."
350 See *Moments of Being*, pps. 161-201. The *many* critical readings of these two autobiographical pieces are too numerous to rehearse here, as they are the first and most explicit references Woolf makes regarding the incestuous and molesting advances of her step-brothers.
351 *Ibid.*, 27-28.
352 Woolf's stated conclusion in *A Room of One's Own*, of course.
353 *Ibid.*
354 *Moments of Being*, 149.
355 What Woolf repeatedly calls them in her memoir "A Sketch of the Past."
356 *Ibid.*, 177
357 See Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again*. Seven of the ten men he associated with early Bloomsbury were indeed Apostles, and all of them took the classics tripos.
358 *MOB*, 189.
359 *Ibid.*, 190.
360 *Ibid.*, 191.
361 *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 326
362 Susan Dick notes the probable model for her Charmides here is Clive Bell, who'd recently married Vanessa. They'd all traveled together in April of 1908 to St. Ives in Cornwall, where Clive and Virginia took long walks together on the Cornish hills. See Dick's notes to *Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 339.
363 *Ibid.*
364 *Common Reader*, "On Not Knowing Greek."
365 *Ibid.*, 25-26., emphasis mine.
366 *CSF*, 66-67.
367 "The Perfect Language" first published by Woolf in *The Times Literary Supplement*, May 24, 1917, reprinted here in *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Works*, ebook.

- 368 *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, p. 8.
- 369 *Hellenism and Loss in the Work of Virginia Woolf*, p. 8. Emphasis his.
- 370 “Dialogue upon Mt. Pentelicus,” *Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 64
- 371 Koulouris, 8.
- 372 *Common Reader*, 1st lines of essay.
- 373 For the most comprehensive assessment of Arnold’s sway, see Frank Turner’s chapter “Victorian Humanistic Hellenism” in *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1981, especially pages 15-36.
- 374 Woolf’s essays, letters, autobiography, and fiction are riddled with references and allusions to Matthew Arnold.
- 375 Never mind that the Greek peasants would not belong, if transplanted, to the English upper class! The terms “Philistinism” and “Barbarism” became synonymous with anything pitted against high culture, and Woolf is poking fun at the English tourists’ misprisions of multiple texts and references along the way.
- 376 *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, p. 18
- 377 “On Not Knowing Greek,” ebook.
- 378 *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, 1869, 1st Ed. Public Domain Book, ebook, 66ff
- 379 *Ibid.*, 144, 71
- 380 *Ibid.*, 71-72.
- 381 *Ibid.*, 73.
- 382 Behind this thought for both Arnold and Woolf is Wincklemann’s “Solar Theory” of Greek radiance and light.
- 383 Indeed, many of the notions of Hellenism found in *Culture & Anarchy* first made their appearance in his essay “Heinrich Heine.”
- 384 Again, see Turner’s close reading of Arnold in *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, here specifically pages 18-22.
- 385 *Culture and Anarchy*, 163.
- 386 Matthew Arnold, *On the Classical Tradition*, p. 1.
- 387 Thomas Arnold’s “Introduction” to *History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides*, 3; xiv., qtd. in Turner’s *Greek Heritage*, p. 27.
- 388 from Arnold’s inaugural lecture as professor of poetry at Oxford, “The Modern Element in Poetry.” *On the Classical Tradition*, p. 20.
- 389 *Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. II, Virginia Woolf: The Complete Collection*, ebook.
- 390 from Woolf’s review of “Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold,” first appearing in *Nation & Athenaeum*, Feb. 16, 1924. *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Works*, ebook.
- 391 *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 67-68
- 392 *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 63.
- 393 *Ibid.*

- 394 "Virginia Woolf: 'A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus,'" *TLS*, Sept. 11-17, 1987, 979. 395
Complete Shorter Fiction, 65.
- 396 *Ibid.*
- 397 *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock; Including his Novels, Poems, Fugitive Pieces, Criticisms, etc.* Vol. II, ed. by Henry Cole, London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1875, Google eBook, p. 125.
- 398 from the *Crotchet's Castle* chapter "The Sleeping Venus," p. 126.
- 399 *Ibid.* 122.
- 400 *Ibid.*, 125.
- 401 127.
- 402 Thoby Stephen had indeed recently voted to do so.
- 403 *Shorter Fiction*, 66. The "tripos" of course refers to the undergraduate Classical Tripos at Cambridge, upon which Adrian had only earned a 3rd, his Greek knowledge and translation skills not measuring up to the exemplary 1st or more accomplished 2nd. 404 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 405 *Works of Peacock*, 126-27. 406 *Peacock*, 122
- 407 See University of Southampton's online course, *Wellington and The Battle of Waterloo*, "Achilles and the Ladies of England." Online, <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/wellington-and-waterloo/1/steps/35648>
- 408 Turner, 46-47.
- 409 See full story of Canova's nude: <http://rijksmuseumamsterdam.blogspot.cz/2012/10/met-antonio-canova-napoleon-as-mars.html>
- 410 *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 23
- 411 *Complete Works of Virginia Woolf*, ebook, Loc 15411.
- 412 *Complete Works*, loc 14591.
- 413 Again, see Turner, pages 40-48.
- 414 *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols., ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), 5:230. 415 See Reynold's *Discourses Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy*, ed. Roger Fry (London: Seeley and Co., 1905). As a prime example: "The Art which we profess has beauty for its object; this it is our business to discover and to express; the beauty of which we are in quest is general and intellectual; it is an idea that subsists only in the individual; the sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it....and conducting the thoughts through successive stages of excellence, till that contemplation of universal rectitude and harmony which began by Taste, may, as it is exalted and refined, conclude in Virtue." p. 264.
- 416 for the role of Nettleship and Jowett, see "The Victorian Platonic Revival" in Turner's *Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, 369-446.
- 417 *Hellenism and Loss in the Works of Virginia Woolf*. p. 40.
- 418 London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1885, p. vii.
- 419 *Ibid.*, 189.
- 420 *Prolegomena*, 1-2.
- 421 Usually included in this list along with Harrison are William Robertson Smith,

anthropologists F.M. Cornford, Gilbert Murray (at Oxford), and A.B. Cook. By most accounts, including Robert Ackerman's definitive study on the Cambridge Ritualists, Harrison is at the very center of the group and the most passionate, forceful contributor.

422 see *The Myth and Ritual School: J. G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists* by Robert Ackerman. (New York: Rutledge, 1991).

423 Frank Turner's term for the Hellenistic movement of the latter half of the 19th century that turned to Darwin's theory as the impetus to discover origins in the field.

424 See, for starters, Patricia Malka, *Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Jane Harrison's Con/Spiracy*. Studies in Modern Literature (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987); Jane Marcus, "Taking the Bull by the Udders: Sexual Difference in Virginia Woolf—A Conspiracy Theory." *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

425 Woolf famously alludes to her in *A Room of Ones Own* in the first chapter, the culminating scene of her reverie traipsing through Fernham on beautiful Spring evening before the reality of October and an insipid serving of soup interrupts the fantasy:

....but in this light they were phantoms only, half guessed, half seen...then on the terrace, as if popping out to breathe the air, to glance at the garden, came a bent figure, formidable yet humble, with her great forehead and her shabby dress—could it be the famous scholar, could it be J— H— herself? (17)

The Woolf's Hogarth Press had just published Harrison's autobiography, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (1925) a few years previous to the publication of *Room*, and Woolf's acquaintance and friendship, not to mention her influence upon Woolf's feminism, is well documented during Woolf's mature work from *To the Lighthouse* to *The Waves*, but the shadow of Jane Ellen Harrison also makes an earlier guest appearance in Jacob's Room:

Miss Umphelby sings him melodiously enough, accurately too, ...and then, taking her way up the avenue towards Newnham, she lets her fancy play upon other details of men's meeting with women which have never got into print. Her lectures, therefore, are not half so well attended as those of Cowen, and the thing she might have said in elucidation of the text for ever left out. In short, face a teacher with the image of the taught and the mirror breaks. (42)

426 *Three Guineas*, "Three," (New York: Harcourt, 1938), p. 85

427 *Ibid*, 86-90

428 *Greek Heritage*, 36.

429 Woolf derives the surname of Jacob Flanders from Flanders Field, one of the bloodiest battlefields of WWI. John McCrae's patriotic poem "In Flanders Fields" became the most famous jingoistic call to continue the fight of the dead soldiers. See Paul Fussell's seminal *The Great War and Modern Memory* for an excellent exegesis of this poem in the context of WWI poetry.

430 "The Intellectual Status of Women," first published in *The New Statesman*, Oct. 9, 1929.

431 As mentioned in previous chapters, the studies are numerous, with the most important being Martha C. Carpentier, *Ritual, myth, and the modernist text: the influence of Jane Ellen Harrison on Joyce, Eliot and Woolf*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1998. Patricia Malka, *Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Jane Harrison's Con/Spiracy*. Studies in Modern Literature (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987); Jane Marcus, "Taking the Bull by the Udders: Sexual Difference in Virginia Woolf—A Conspiracy Theory." *Virginia Woolf and the*

Languages of Patriarchy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

432 Tina Barr's argument appears in "Divine Politics: Virginia Woolf's Journey toward Eleusis in *To the Lighthouse*. boundary 2, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 125-145. Martha Carpentier's in the above-mentioned *Ritual, myth, and the modernist text*, "Chapter 7: Themis in *To the Lighthouse*; Jane Harrison and Virginia Woolf," pp. 171-193. Jane Marcus for starters in *The Languages of Patriarchy* (cited above) and *Art and Anger*, Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1988, p. 93.

433 Koulouris, 40.

434 Adorno's famous postulation of Modernism's "negative dialectics" appeared posthumously in *Aesthetic Theory*, 1970. 435 "Themis in *To the Lighthouse*," 171.

436 I am indebted to Jane Marcus for pointing this out after she researched the library holdings of Leonard and Virginia Woolf. *The Languages of Patriarchy*, p. 195.

437 *Letters Vol. 3*, p. 58.

438 See, again, Ackerman's *James Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*, but also his "Introduction" to Harrison's *Prolegomena*. Mythos edition. (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1991.)

439 See Ackerman's Introduction to *Prolegomena*, xviii.

440 *Darwin and Modern Science: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Charles Darwin and of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Publication of The Origin of Species*, ed. by A.C. Seward. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), p. 473.

441 *Ibid.*, 474.

442 *Origin of Species*, 394.

443 *Darwin and Modern Science*, 476.

444 *Origin of Species*, 394.

445 *Ibid.*, 475.

446 Darwin, as Harrison points out, in fact wrote to Tylor after reading *Primitive Culture*, noting, 'It is wonderful how you trace animism from the lower races up the religious belief of the highest races. It will make me for the future look at religion—'a belief in the should, etc.'—from a new point of view.'" (476)

447 *Darwin and Modern Science*, 482.

448 397.

449 Qtd. by Ackerman in his "Introduction" to *Prolegomena*, p. xix.

450 *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1912. Ebook reprinted by Google.

451 *Ibid.*

452 *Ibid.*

453 *Ibid.*

454 *Themis*, "Introduction," ebook.

455 *Ibid.*

456 *Ibid.*

- 457 *Themis*, "Introduction," ebook.
- 458 Ibid.
- 459 See Frank Turner and Martha Carpentier on this.
- 460 *Roger Fry: a Biography*: Virginia Woolf: Complete Works, ebook.
- 461 *Themis*, Introduction, ebook.
- 462 *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.
- 463 "Preface" to *Orlando A Biography*, (New York: HBJ, 1928). See Ch. 1 of *Absent Father* for Meisel's account of Pater's conspicuous absence as a source for Woolf's major aesthetic development, particularly towards an aesthetics of the moment. Harold Bloom agrees with Perry Meisel, not surprising since Meisel uses Blooms *Anxiety of Influence* as the structural scaffolding of his argument.
- 464 The unfinished *Gaston Latour* and some of the essays in *Appreciations* are the largest exceptions.
- 465 "Heraclitus says 'All things are in motion and nothing at rest'" Plato's *Cratylus*, 402A. The "Conclusion" is quoted from *Three Major Texts (The Renaissance, Appreciations, and Imaginary Portraits)*, ed. by William E. Buckler (New York: NYU Press, 1986) 218-219.
- 466 *The Works of Walter Pater in Eight Volumes, VI: Plato and Platonism; A series of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1901) 14. 467 "Conclusion," *Three Major Texts*, 218-220. All future references will be cited in text.
- 468 There are notable exceptions, which this chapter will later draw out.
- 469 *Three Major Texts (Appreciations)*, 399.
- 470 "Introduction" to *Marius the Epicurean* (London: Penguin,1985) 10.
- 471 *The Intellectual Context of Walter Pater's "Conclusion"* from *Prose Studies*, vol. 4 (May 1981): Frank Cass and Co.
- 472 *Walter Pater*, ed. with and introduction by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1985) 139.
- 473 Emphasis Pater's, *Plato and Platonism*, 18. Hereafter to be cited in text as *PP*.
- 474 *On the Origin of Species*, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Gillian Beer. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7. 475 "Leonardo da Vinci," *Three Major Texts (The Renaissance)* 150.
- 476 Ibid
- 477 Ibid
- 478 *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III*, p. 33.
- 479 "Conclusion," *Three Major Texts*, 217-218.
- 480 *Renaissance* "Conclusion," *TMT*, 220.
- 481 "The Will as Vision," *Marius the Epicurean*, ed. with introduction and notes by Michael Levey (London: Penguin, 1985) 210-13. Future references will be cited in text as *ME*.
- 482 from Pater's footnote to the third edition *Renaissance* "Conclusion."

- 483 Paraphrased from “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis (1917),” *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. James Strachey (London, 1956): 17:140-41. The third blow, in narcissistic fashion, was of course his own theories of psycho-analysis.
- 484 Paraphrased from her introductory chapter arguments, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1985).
- 485 I gloss the story of Pater’s professional travails after *The Renaissance*, as there has not been a lengthy discussion of the “Conclusion” I’ve come across that doesn’t retell it. Perry Meisel’s chapter “Relations” in *The Absent Father* is as good an account as any.
- 486 *Letters of Walter Pater*, ed. by Lawrence Evans (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1970) xxi.
- 487 *Cornhill 32* (July 1875): 91-101. Perry Meisel argues persuasively that Pater is the source and inspiration for Stephen’s essay. See *Absent Father*, 1-7.
- 488 *The Letters of George Eliot, V*. Ed. Gordon S. Haight, (New Haven, 1955) 455.
- 489 From the first lines of Frederic Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*.
- 490 *Parmenides, The Works of Plato, IV*. Trans. B. Jowett. Ed. Irwin Edman. (New York: Random House, 1956) 90-93.
- 491 *Textual Voyages; Platonic Allusions in Virginia Woolf’s Fiction*, 74-75. This, as previously mentioned, should also include Woolf’s primary reading of Darwin, a reading Meisel ignores in both Woolf and Pater.
- 492 Stephen Jay Gould, “Evolution and the Triumph of Homology, or Why History Matters,” *American Scientist*, Vol. 74, Jan- Feb., 1986, 60-69, p. 60.
- 493 While much of Spencer’s ‘synthetic’ philosophy came after *Origin*, some key works did not. For instance, *Social Statics* (1851) and *Principles of Psychology* (1855).
- 494 *Principles of Geology*, 6th ed. 3 vols., (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1842) 10-11.
- 495 “Zoological Philosophy,” *Darwin*, ed. by Philip Appleman (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001) 49.
- 496 the phrase is from Michael Ruse and Edward O. Wilson’s “The Evolution of Ethics,” *Darwin*, 507.
- 497 From Spencer’s *Social Statics*, qtd. In “The Vogue of Spencer,” Richard Hofstadter, *Darwin*, 391-392.
- 498 *What is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1961) 71.
- 499 “Evolution and the Triumph of Homology,” 63.
- 500 *Ibid*, 61
- 501 *Principles of Geology*, 78-79 and taken here in the context discussed in Gillian Beer’s *Darwin’s Plots*, 5.
- 502 See Richard Hofstadter’s “The Vogue of Spencer,” *Darwin*, 389-395.
- 503 “A Stranger in London,” *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie, (New York, HBJ, 1986), p. 203.
- 504 *Untimely Meditations*, trans. By R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1997) 59-123. Future references will be cited as *UT*.
- 505 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra; A Book for None and All*, trans. By Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 157-60.

- 506 *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, translated, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), 48-50 & 65.
- 507 *The Gay Science*, (1882, 1887) para. 125; Walter Kaufmann ed. (New York: Vintage, 1974), pp.181-82.
- 508 *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*, p.55.
- 509 *Friedrich Nietzsche-Werke, Vol. 4, "Posthumous writings from the 1880s, including the letters of 1861-1889,"* ed. Karl Schlechta (Frankfurt am Main-Berlin-Wien: Verlag Ullstein GmbH, 1976), p. 481, as trans. by Margot Norris.
- 510 *Ibid*, p. 117.
- 511 *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, New York: Dover, 1998) ix. Future references will be cited in text as *CE*.
- 512 See *Letters of Leonard Woolf*, ed. by Frederic Spotts (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), pp. 485-6; *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, V*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: HBJ, 1979), p. 91; Karin Stephen's *The Misuse of Mind* was published in 1922.
- 513 See Anne Banfield, "Tragic Time," p. 44.
- 514 "Virginia Woolf and modernism," *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Sue Roe and Susan Sellers, (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), p. 147.
- 515 *William James: Writings 1902-1910* (New York: The Library of America, 1987), "The Compounding of Consciousness," *A Pluralistic Universe*, 726-27. Future references will be cited as *PU*.
- 516 Inman argues that this passage of the conclusion probably derives from Hume's *A Treatise of Pure Reason*, his section "Of the Infinite Divisibility of Our Ideas of Space and Time," but to do so would only suggest that Pater disagreed with Hume, since Hume did not think time is infinitely divisible ("Pater's Conclusion," *Walter Pater*, 137-138). Given Pater's expansion of it in *Plato and Platonism*, and Pater's example of Heraclitus taken up by the Eleatic School, Zeno's paradoxes as the original and intended source seem far more likely.
- 517 *Timeaus*, 37 D, from which Bergson quotes, p. 318.
- 518 *Science and the Modern World; Lowell Lectures, 1925*, (New York: Pelicon by arrangement with Macmillan, 1948) 143-149. 519 "Introduction" to *Psychology*, viii.
- 520 *Psychology* (the abridged version of *Principles of Psychology* or what came to be known as the "Little Jimmie" of 1892), New York: World Publishing Co., 1948, p. 159. *Emphasis his, not mine*. All future references will be cited as *POP*.
- 521 *Principles*, "Chapter I, Introductory," 1.
- 522 Aesthetics indeed are not a province James often enters successfully, as his letters to Henry, which criticize the aesthetic principles of his later novels, amply testify. But "useless" here should be read, I think, as Roger Fry reads it in *Vision and Design* —namely, that aesthetic appreciations can be distinguished from the moral appreciations precisely by the processes of natural selection that force one to act in "actual life" but not "in the imaginative life."
- 523 *Pragmatism*, ed. and with an intro. by Bruce Kuklick (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981.) 92. Future references will be cited as *P*.
- 524 *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: FSG, 2001) 141. Future references will be cited as *MC*.
- 525 "Two Reviews of *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, by Charles

- Darwin,” *The Works of William James; Essays, Comments, and Reviews* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988) 234-35.
- 526 “William James’s Conception of Truth,” *Philosophical Essays*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968) 118.
- 527 “Two English Critics,” *William James: Writings 1902-1910* (New York: The Library of America, 1987) 962.
- 528 “Pragmatism,” *Philosophical Essays*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968) 105-106.
- 529 Qtd. From *The Metaphysical Club*, 375, and referenced from *Dialogue on John Dewey*, ed. Corliss Lamont, (New York: Horizon Press, 1959) 335.
- 530 See Susan Dick’s “Notes” to the Appendices in *Complete Shorter Fiction* regarding the dating of “The Monkeys”, p. 339.
- 531 *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 324-25
- 532 *The Prelude* they did publish, but *Ulysses* was too long to be taken on by the Woolfs’ small press.
- 533 *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I: 1915-1919*, ed. By Anne Olivier Bell (New York: HBJ, 1977). 192.
- 534 Of peripheral interest are the three new “flies” that then appear in her diary: Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Milton. They, unlike Darwin and Plato, are discussed directly, with ease and conviction; Milton, she states with great portent, “was the first of the masculinists” (190).
- 535 *Ibid.* 190.
- 536 “On Not Knowing Greek,” *The Common Reader*, Ed. and Intro. by Andrew McNeillie. (New York: HBJ, 1925) 32.
- 537 Diary V., Oct. 1940, p. 331.
- 538 *Ibid.*, 316.
- 539 *Ibid.*, 274.
- 540 *Ibid.*, 339.
- 541 See both *The Common Ground*, “Introduction,” and Christina Alt’s comments in *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*, (Cambridge UP, 2010), p. 4-5.
- 542 topics archived at <http://www.georgetowncollege.edu/Departments/English/Woolf>.
Selected essay from the conference have been published in *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, ed. by Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman, (Clemson UP, 2011).
- 543 See especially pages 109-116 in Morrisson on “Environmental Science,” *Modernism, Science, and Technology*, Bloomsbury, 2016.
- 544 See Morrisson, Swanson, Scott, and especially Alt on this newfound critical attention. Alt’s chapters “The natural history tradition” and “The modern life sciences” in *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*, (14-71), are especially thoroughgoing on this point.
- 545 See, again, the many papers presented and published in *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, especially “Taking Her Fences: The Equestrian Virginia Woolf” by Beth Rigel Daugherty (61-70); “The Metaphysics of Flowers in *The Waves* by Laci Mattison (71-77); “The Woolf, the Horse, and the Fox: Recurrent Motifs in *Jacob’s Room* and *Orlando*” (108-116) by

Vara Neverow; “‘The Bird is the Word’; Virginia Woolf and W.H. Hudson, Visionary Ornithologist” (133-142) by Diane Gillespie; “Evolution History, and Flush; or, The Origin of Spaniels” by Jeanne Dubino (143-150); and “‘Lappin and Lapinova’; A Woolf in Hare’s Clothing?” by Kathryn Simpson (151-56).

546 *Virginia Woolf, Jane Ellen Harrison, and the Spirit of Modernist Classicism*, (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2014), p. 2.

547 taken from Robert D. Richardson’s biography of *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

548 *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, “Introduction,” Cambridge UP, pg. 2. 549 *Ibid.*, 3 & 21.

550 *Ibid.*, 21

551 *Ibid.*, 7

552 “Modernist Temporality: The Science and Philosophy and Aesthetics of Temporality from 1880,” *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, p. 33.

553 *Ibid.*

554 “The Mark on the Wall,” *Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, 84

555 See page 2 of Scott’s “Introduction” to *In the Hollow of the Wave* as well as Mark S. Morrisson’s *Modern, Science, and Technology*, p. 111. Haraway originally used this term in her book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, (Routledge, 2015).

556 “At Other Times: Modernism and the ‘Primitive,’” *Cambridge History of Modernism*, 64.

557 *Ibid.*, 65

558 Michael Levenson’s *Genealogy of Modernism (1984)* and Sanford Schwartz’s *Matrix of Modernism (1985)* certainly come to mind most prominently in this respect.

559 qtd. in Richards, 72.

560 *Ibid.*

561 *Ibid.*, 73.

562 As referenced in Richards, p. 74.

563 *Ibid.*

564 Hulme, T. E. “Romanticism and Classicism by T. E. Hulme.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation,

www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69477/romanticism-and-classicism.

565 Indeed, while de Vries’ own scientific research on plant specimens has been disproven, his “saltation” theory of evolution has been revisited by Stephen Jay Gould and others in the form of punctuated equilibrium. Not a dispute over whether or not evolution happens, it is the degree of time in which it happens, still in the millions of years. See Morrison’s chapter on “Life Sciences” in *Science, Technology, and Modernism*. For Hulme, it really is the “appearance of scientific backing,” well read as he was.

566 “Romanticism and Classicism by T. E. Hulme.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69477/romanticism-and-classicism.

567 Ezra Pound, “A Retrospect,” University of Illinois, www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/retrospect.htm. Originally published as *Pavannes and Divagations (1918)*.

- 568 *In the Hollow of the Wave*, p. 14.
- 569 *Ibid.* 15.
- 570 *Ibid.* 16
- 571 *In the Hollow of the Wave*, 16-17
- 572 *Men Without Art*, 139-140.
- 573 *In the Hollow of the Wave*, 14.
- 574 *Ibid.*
- 575 *In the Hollow of the Wave*, 17-18.
- 576 *Time and Western Man*, (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), p. 11.
- 577 "The Aftershocks of Blast: Manifestos, Satire, and the Rear-Guard of Modernism," *Bad Modernisms*, ed. by Douglas Mao & Rebecca L. Walkowitz, p. 44. Puchner's assessment of Lewis's "rear-guardism" is indeed apt: "...caught between advancement and retreat, the rear-guard lacks room to move and thus engages in an endless and often disoriented back and forth, sideway maneuvers and feints, and often breaks off from the main corps to find itself alone and surrounded by enemies everywhere" (45).⁵⁷⁸ *Time and Western Man*, 15-16 & 35.
- 579 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 580 "Forced Exile: Walter Pater's Queer Modernism," *Bad Modernisms*, p. 15.
- 581 *Ibid.* 27
- 582 *Ibid.*, 26-27.
- 583 "Virginia Woolf's Evasion: Critical Cosmopolitanism and British Modernism," *Bad Modernisms*, 120-121.
- 584 as quoted by Walkowitz, p. 124.
- 585 *Ibid.*, 125.
- 586 *Ibid.*, 127.
- 587 *Mrs. Dalloway*, p. 37.
- 588 *Mrs. Dalloway*, 9.
- 589 *Bad Modernisms*, 142.
- 590 see *Modernism, Science, and Technology*, p. 112, as well as Scott's "Ecofeminism, Holism, and Natural Order" in *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, p. 5.
- 591 *Modernism, Science, and Technology*, p. 112.
- 592 *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*, 9.
- 593 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 594 see "Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader*, 147. Indeed, though Woolf qualifies her praise of Hudson in relation to Conrad and Hardy, reserving that gratitude in "a much lesser degree" than the other two, his significance to Woolf in relation to her Darwinian experimentation with form and temporality, along with Hardy and Conrad, has yet to be studied in a manner it deserves. See also Diane F. Gillespie, "The Bird is the Word": Virginia Woolf and W. H. Hudson, Visionary Ornithologist," *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, 133-142.
- 595 *Alt*, p. 20.
- 596 *Ibid.*, 30-35.

- 597 *Ibid.* 171.
- 598 *Ibid.*, 176-79.
- 599 *Ibid.*, 189-90.
- 600 *Ibid.*, 190.
- 601 *Modern Fiction and Vagueness*, Cambridge UP, 2015, p. 69.
- 602 “When in December 1910?; Virginia Woolf, Bertrand Russell, and the Question of Vagueness,” *Modern Fiction and Vagueness*, p. 69.
- 603 *Natural History of Pragmatism*, 1 & 92-95.
- 604 As referenced by D. Richardson in *Natural History*, 92.
- 605 *Ibid.*, ix-x.
- 606 Russell’s essay qtd. in Quigley, 71.
- 607 The final paragraph of “Craftsmanship,” as qtd. by Quigley, missing the last several sentences.
- 608 *Night & Day*, p. 34.
- 609 *Ibid.*, 240.
- 610 *Ibid.*, 431-32.
- 611 *The Vague in Modern Fiction*, 84.
- 612 *Common Reader*, 150.
- 613 *Modernism and Vagueness*, 86; *Night and Day*, 420.
- 614 qtd. in Sim, “Virginia Woolf Tracing Patterns through Plato’s Forms,” p. 39.
- 615 *Modern Fiction and Vagueness*, p. 68.
- 616 See North, pg. 8, on “symbiosis between recurrence and recombination”; and then Chapter 3: “Darwin’s Renovation of the New,” 61-83.
- 617 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 618 *Ibid.* 73.
- 619 *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. by Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge University Press, 1996); C. Armstrong, “Why Phaedrus? Plato in Virginia Woolf’s novel *Jacob’s Room*,” *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 11; 108-125; “Virginia Woolf Tracing Patterns through Plato’s Forms,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 28: 38-48.
- 620 “The Real World: Woolf and Ecofeminism,” *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, 25.
- 621 *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, 4.
- 622 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 623 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 624 from “The Return to the Primitive” in *Time and the Western Man*, 34-35.

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