"OUT OF THE HEART OF SPRING":

VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE CHANGING SHAPES OF PASTORAL

1928-1938

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“OUT OF THE HEART OF SPRING”:
VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE CHANGING SHAPES OF PASTORAL 1928-1938.

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This dissertation reads Woolf’s engagement with the changing shapes of pastoral in the decade between 1928-1938 with individual chapters on *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), and *The Waves* (1931), and one combined chapter on *The Years* (1937) and *Three Guineas* (1938). In them, I argue that Woolf utilizes pastoral modes to frame large scale ideological concerns with artistic subjectivity, feminist historiography, and national belonging. In this endeavor, Woolf’s self-consciously-deployed pastoral poetics function as critical social theory. In each chapter, I identify a feminist poetics for Woolf that intervenes at both institutional and individual levels of significance. On the institutional level, Woolf largely uses forms of pastoral to demystify female subordination and to challenge its imbeddedness in the British cultural imaginary. On an individual one, she proposes pastoral experience as an agent crucial both to self- and societal transformation. In following the protean forms of Woolf’s pastoral, this inquiry practices and enacts a similar kind of poetic wandering to offer sustained close readings of Woolf’s own world of rich intertextual reference and to explore the intensification of Woolf’s pastoral commitments as they emerge from a classical literary context and intend on politics, aesthetics, and history. The Woolf that emerges from these woods into pastures new is one dedicated to pastoral, not just as a vehicle for poetic authority in the classical sense, but as mode of cultural critique and

ontological possibility—a resource on which she draws to work out a more radical poetics of being in relation to reconfigured communal understandings with radical emancipatory prospects at its heart.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shilo McGiff is a poet, teacher, and literary critic living in Ithaca, NY. She manages to thrive amidst many failures of goodness, has an impeccable eye for all things beautiful, is the companion you'd most want on a road trip involving Emily Dickinson's grave, and will be known as Doctor for all the rest of her days. She teaches at Wells College in Aurora, NY

DEDICATION

For Keegan and Liam
(my warp and my weft)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Green in nature is one thing, green in literature another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces…" At least so the biographer of *Orlando* asserts as Orlando looks out the window and tries to match precisely the green of a laurel bush growing outside to the green of his poetic imagination…and fails. This endless tension, however, between nature and letters, between *physis* and *poiesis*, will furnish the ground where Orlando's poem, "The Oak Tree," 400 years in the making, finally takes root and grows.

Much like Orlando's "Oak Tree," this project has had a long genesis. In this sense, it is, perhaps, the sum of its most productive failures. It started off as a dissertation about William Shakespeare, Laurence Sterne, and Virginia Woolf and its scope was once praised by Patricia Parker at a cocktail reception for the Shakespeare Association of America—which might account for my refusal to abandon its immensity even in the face of advice from those who knew much better than I did what a project of that magnitude might entail. It may account also for the number of my close colleagues and long-term collaborators that went on to defend and to jobs before I did—one with the exasperated suggestion that I had material for two dissertations, or possibly three. Yes, Adhaar Desai, it is finally finished. In all the thinking that precedes it and in the deep intertextual references that remain, if only as echoes, this dissertation may contain multitudes, but it has at last found its footing on the good advice of Shirley Samuels and the gentle persistence of Neil Saccamano,

who suggested that my work on Sterne was interesting, but that, in thinking about Virginia Woolf, my writing truly came alive. For the final shape of this project, I am indebted to the committee members who provided essential guidance and support in its varying stages: Rayna Kalas, Philip Lorenz, Jenny Mann, and Walter Cohen. I feel an eternal debt of gratitude to Rick Bogel for his sharp thinking, which has always made my own thinking better, and for his constancy as a mentor and friend, which has made being a human better. I am thankful to Michelle Mannella and Kara Peet for their unerring advocacy and guidance through the paperwork labyrinth. I feel the deepest of gratitude to my chair, Neil Saccamano, for taking on an itinerant project and guiding it home with rigor, compassion, and grace.

Over the years, I have been additionally fortunate in the wit and kindness of several benevolent spirits. Without them, I could not have walked this far. Their brilliance has impressed me and their encouragement has made indelible marks on my heart. Tonia Sutherland and Giffen Maupin have given their own hearts, eyes, and expertise to this project in its various iterations, over many miles, and in countless ways. Their solidarity and sisterhood has meant everything. Sarah Ensor and Ingrid Diran continue to motivate me with our shared search for common ground in this peripatetic life and that sweet a(cu)men. My colleagues and mentors at Wells College —Catherine Burroughs, Bruce Bennett, Dan Rosenberg, and Alicia Rebecca Myers— have sustained me with their intellectual companionship, laughter, shared commitment to teaching, and open classroom doors. Kerry Quinn and Gerard Aching have modeled hospitality in its truest sense and galvanized me with their creativity, determination,

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In the academy, as in "real life," the community we have is the one that we make. I am grateful to Bryan Alkemeyer for sharing his commitment to teaching and mentorship with me as we worked on the Mentoring Program for Graduate Students in English together. I am likewise grateful for the collaboration and companionship of the Early Modern Reading Group, whose numbers also included Matt Bucemi, Melissa Figueroa, Abigail Fisher, Molly Katz, Matthew Kibbee, and Jennifer Row. I asked for interlocutors and a wider forum for our thinking as early modernists and Douglas McQueen-Thompson helped me build it with both panache and aplomb. If Douglas helped me build it, the collegiality of Adhaar Desai helped me sustain it. Adhaar worked closely with me on both the Mentor Program and EMRG, and he dreamed and schemed along with me on more than one Gottschalk Symposium. I have counted on him for spark and snark in equal measure, and I hope to do so for many years to come. My time spent as an early modernist was time spent among friends, and it has made me a better reader of Woolf than I ever could have anticipated.

To the the friends and colleagues who rallied around me to create a rotating childcare schedule so I could TA my dream course in the evenings, who invited me to their soirées, who laughed with me at The Chapter House, who made valentines with

my children, who participated in a series of ill-fated soccer games, who hiked with me, fought with me about Kant, ignored my emails about Nietzsche, and filled nights with raucous piano music, cartoons, and poetry, I am thankful: Cecily Swanson, Celeste Pietrusza, Danielle Haque, Stephanie DeGooyer, Lily Cui, Jacob Brogan, Jess Keiser, Ben Glaser, Pelin Ariner, Steve Chang, Michael Garrett, and Corinna Lee have each given me something essential and irreplaceable of the irresponsible and irrepressible. I am grateful for the friendship of the inimitable and unapologetic Caetlin Benson-Allot, and that of dancing philosopher, Cristina Dahl. These women were two of my first friends at Cornell, and they remain scholars and humans that I both respect and admire.

Finally, an extended dedication:

To my grandmothers, Maria de la Luz Martinez (1925-2008) and Edie McGiff (1927-2003), whose lessons live in me —

To my parents, Mary Lou and Thomas McGiff, who never doubted that I could do this, even when I did: I am forever grateful for your faith and love—and for the fighting spirit and depth of heart that you have modeled for me every day of my life—

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are the warp and weft of my labor and love, my *raisons d'être*, and who make me endlessly proud—

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INTRODUCTION

PASTORAL PRAXIS AS FEMINST HISTORIOGRAPHY

On September 12th, 1940, critic and novelist Virginia Woolf recorded in her diary the intention to write a new collection of essays, a "Common History" book that might range freely through the field of English literary history. At the time of her death, six months later, she had completed a series of notes detailing her thoughts and intentions for the book and two essays in draft forms, one introductory essay titled "Anon" and one provisionally called "The Reader." As Brenda Silver notes in her reconstruction of these late pieces, the impetus for Woolf's new work sprang from her dissatisfaction with linear and conventional approaches to social and literary history and a desire to find a form that might freely convey "the underlying forces of historical process as she perceived them, and…the more evanescent growth of human consciousness and experience" (359). Participant in what has been called "a cultural turn" in Woolf's late writing, the unfinished project continues an already existing movement away from a preoccupation with the subject and subjectivity associated with high modernism in her earlier novels and into broader temporal and social contextualizations without abandoning her commitments to metapoetic and aesthetic experimentation. Part ethnography and part allegory, her *Common History*, or *Turning the Page* as it might also have been called, joined her interests in historiography with her desire for decentered theories of reading and writing.

Still thinking on her project a month later she writes:

> Saturday 26 October 1940: '"The complete Insider" -- I have just coined this title to express my feeling towards George Trevelyan; who has just been made Master of Trinity: whose history of England I began after tea with a glorious sense of my own free & easiness in writing now... I like outsiders better. Insiders write a colourless English. They are turned out by the University machine. Father was one variety. I don't love them. I don't savour them. Insiders are the glory of the 19th century. They do a great service like Roman roads. But they avoid the forests & the will-o-the-wisps.

The desire for a common history, much like her investment in the *Common Reader* nearly two decades before, was part of Woolf's own complicated affinity for outsiders and outsideness. As the daughter of Cambridge scholar and author, Leslie Stephen, she is considered by many critical accounts to be his intellectual heir, encouraged in both her literary curiosity and ambition. As Katherine Hill points out, Woolf's early training in history and biography came from her father's rigorous attention to the appropriateness of these forms for his daughter's intellectual development. Virginia's early reading program included a heavy emphasis on the works of Thomas Carlyle, a writer whom Stephen admired for both his attentions to ordinary lives as worthy historical materials and the immediacy of their characterization.[1] Simultaneously, Woolf, narrates her father's influence as an oppressive patriarchal one, writing nearly a

[1] In a 1896 critical introduction to Carlyle's life and work Leslie Stephen writes: "No one was so keenly sensitive as Carlyle to the interest of the little gleams of light which reveal our ancestors not only stirred by the great passions, but absorbed like ourselves by the trivialities of the day."

quarter century after his death in her diary that “his life would have completely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing. No books” (D3:208). She felt keenly her exclusion from the public schooling and the university education afforded to her brothers and other men, but denied to her and other women of her time. She, would, however, by the end of her life, turn these same exclusions into a separatist political identity, calling in *Three Guineas* for a Society of Outsiders. Positioned both in and outside a dominant literary tradition, the question of how to write a theory of literature that might be invested in historical continuity without offering that continuity as a totalizing or autocratic form remained a vexing one. How might the self-proclaimed “daughter of educated men” write history from the margins? What form might such an, arguably feminist, history take?

For Woolf, one such answer offers itself in pastoral, in the “forests and the will-o-the-wisps.” A mode deeply imbedded in Woolf’s literary praxis, a commitment to pastoral governs some of her earliest writing to the last as unconscious impulse and self-conscious literary form. For early Woolf, pastoral manifests in the lines of Milton’s *Comus* that underpin Rachel Vinrace’s illness and death in *The Voyage Out* (1915) and the use to which she puts Plato’s *Phaedrus*, both in her satirical sketch of English tourists in the Aegean countryside in “A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus” (1906) and in the refracted Victorian Hellenism of the kaleidoscopically elegiac *Jacob’s Room* (1922). It is evident in the way she imagines, in “On Not Knowing Greek” from her first series *The Common Reader* (1925), a pastoral context for her reading of Sophocles overlaid on rural English life:

> Even nowadays such villages are to be found in the wilder part of England, and as we enter them we can scarcely help feeling that here, in this cluster of cottages, cut off from rail or city, are all the elements of a perfect existence… Here life has cut the same grooves for centuries; customs have arisen; legends have attached themselves to hill-tops and solitary trees, and the village has its history, its festivals, and its rivalries (40).

Pastoral suffuses the lyrical slowness and dream-like aestheticism of *To The Lighthouse* (1927) from its opening idealization of the lighthouse "running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men" (16) up to Lily Briscoe's final vision of Mr. Ramsey as he lets "fall from his great height a wreath of violets and asphodels, which fluttering slowly, lay at length upon the earth" (211). It is, perhaps, this intertwining of pastoral's lyric energies and the deep memorializing impulses of *To The Lighthouse* that leads Woolf to re-imagine the form of her novels as possible elegies.[2] Yet, as Jane Goldman observes in *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf:*

> ...critical attention to Woolf's novels as self-proclaimed "elegies…have not prompted rigorous or sustained pastoral-elegiac readings of her work. Most critics have been content, instead, to allow loose definitions of elegy and rather vague personal and biographical interpretations to dominate. (83)

The same might be said of Goldman's first term: pastoral. While Goldman subsequently picks up strands of Woolf's pastoral poetics in range of critical

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[2] "But while I try to write, I am making up "To the Lighthouse"—the sea is to be heard all through it. I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant "novel". A new —— by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?" Saturday, 27th of June, 1925 D3: 34

introductions, this project is, in part, a response to Goldman's challenge: to offer both a sustained and rigorous, even granular reading of Woolf's use of pastoral in not only her novels, but her essays, as well. In so doing, I explore the intensification of Woolf's pastoral commitments as they emerge from a classical literary context and intend on politics, aesthetics, and history. The Woolf that emerges from these woods into pastures new is one dedicated to pastoral, not just as a vehicle for poetic authority in the classical sense, but as mode of cultural critique and ontological possibility—a resource on which she draws to work out a more radical poetics of being in relation to reconfigured communal understandings with emancipatory prospects for both men and women at its heart.

For late Woolf, the effort to write a decentered history of literature, in part, meant creating a narrative or narratives that might circumvent deeply entrenched connections she perceived among the patriarchal institutions of household, church, and state. In the broadest sense, as she writes in her manuscript notes for "Reading at Random," she was pursuing a project "about the germ of creation: its thwartings: our society: interruption: conditions." (376) In a more particular one, she was pursuing alternate histories, querying the possibility of vernacular epistemologies and elaborating connections among out-of-the-way places and sites of forgotten knowledge— places she refers to in *Anon.* as " the haunted tree" and "well," "the Maypole" and the "stone." These sites, grounded in a green world and pagan past like the forest or will-o-the wisps to which she refers in her diary, were elements she associated with a lost folk and crypto-feminist consciousness of the kind she she

narrates in *A Room of One's Own*:

> When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Brontë who dashed her brains out on the moor or moped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald, I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folk-songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night. (48-49)

Or to whom she gives elusive embodiment to in the teasing apparition and characterization of "Mrs. Brown," as she leads aspiring writers on a merry chase, dances on an archbishops nose, and comes home to light upon a dresser in Woolf's 1924 essay, "Mr. Arnold and Mrs. Brown." Counterposed to the imperial and well-trafficked "Roman roads," these sites—and the pastoral worlds they evoke—from her double reference to Milton and Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard* to the anonymous mother singing folk ballads to her children in the rustic night, anchor her effort in to "Try to write lit the other way around." *Anon.* was to be a history of "the" writer but it was to follow a folk trajectory and collective impulse as it emerged out of the birdsong and forest and into recorded history, eventually merging with a more democratic notion of "the reader." The very development and evolutions of these

literary possibilities for Woolf is linked tantalizingly to fully realized female characters grounded in the specificities of women's experiences and women's voices authorized by the deepest possibilities of a green world.

Woolf's investment in a native English pastoral tradition as a vehicle for an alternate history and a possible future, although evocative and exciting, is also complicated. The anonymous songs and sites of a green world offer a locus of harmony and ideality that fascinate and soothe in the promise of their very recoverability. Nevertheless, critiques of the pastoral idyll also show it to be a conservative and nostalgic genre that naturalized class inequity, projects of imperialism and outright misogyny—critiques of which Woolf was well aware. Even as Woolf locates an ordinary poetic impulse in the lives of wise women and rambles on the moors, she ghosts that same legacy with its historical violence. The poetically inspired woman may be possessed of devils; crazed Emily Brontë "dashe[s] her brains out" on those iconic moors. The danger of pastoral and its "double longing after innocence and happiness," as Renato Poggioli famously calls it in *The Oaten Flute*, is that it is potentially bad faith in its utopian yearnings, shifting "on the quicksands of wishful thought" (1-2). As potential pastoralist, Woolf consistently troubles her own pastoral terrains. If her engagement with pastoral is informed by a sentiment of nostalgia endemic to pastoral's long history, it is anything but simple.

To this point, many book length studies of pastoral written in the 20th century have contributed to the genesis and shape of this project. Some of them like William Empson's *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935) overlap the time of Woolf's own writing.

Empson's landmark criticism, in which he defines pastoral process as "putting the complex into the simple" (23) and further, that pastoral literatures provide a unifying social force in its traditional implication of a "beautiful relation between rich and poor" (11), references a range of novelists contemporary to Woolf, but does not mention Woolf except as a critic of Richard Bentley.[3] And yet, *Some Version of Pastoral* treads much of the same ground as Woolf's own thinking: folk-art, class consciousness, fascism, love, beauty, the relation of the artist to the public, ideology, the limits of poetic power—and it is perhaps Woolf's omission from Empson's consideration that motivates the closest of readings in this dissertation and contributes to the many versions of pastoral in the pages of its own.

Others studies, such Poggioli's *The Oaten Flute* (1957), Leo Marx's *Machine in the Garden* (1964), Thomas Rosenmeyer *The Green Cabinet* (1969) and Raymond Williams's *The Country and The City* (1973), emerge in the later half of the twentieth century but each contribute their shape to this project and its readings of Woolf. From Leo Marx I have taken the prevailing idea of pastoral "counterforce" (25) by which complex pastoral achieves its significance, and the notion that "the" pastoral ideal may forever be bound in powerful metaphors of contradiction (4). From Rosenmeyer comes the comfort that a "tidy" definition of pastoral tradition(s) may be out of reach (3), but that a reorientation around the classics, in particular starting with Theocritus, will always be instructive. In his discussion of pastoral "detachment" (62-64) I locate

[3] "Bentley's escapade has remained something of scandal; if he was really incapable of understanding Milton said Mrs. Woolf, how far can we credit these eminent classicists on their own ground?" (149)

the reverberation of Woolf's own quest for authorial impersonality. The expression without excessive self-consciousness and ego, for which Woolf strives in *A Room of One's Own,* aligns almost fully with the strategies of anonymity and authorial reticence Rosenmeyer locates in Theocritean pastoral. I consider these questions of poetic voice and the influence of classical pastoral on Woolf's writing more fully in Chapter One. From Raymond Williams I've taken the possibilities of a materialist and marxist criticism that offers a corrective to a critical tradition devoted to "influence," as well as the insights he offers on the country house poem as a reification of a social and economic order derived from "Golden Age simplicity" (14-34). His reading of Jonson's "To Penshurst" structures my reading of Kitty Lasswade's class-driven pastoral autonomy in Chapter Three. The example William's makes of Woolf in his book, however, as a writer for whom "the discontinuity, the atomism of the city were aesthetically experienced as a problem of perception which raised problems of identity —and which was characteristically resolved on arrival in the country" (241) by reading a single passage in *Orlando*, unfortunately and grossly flattens the intercomplication of these very ideas for Woolf.[4]

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, pastoral criticism acquires an overwhelming, momentum, such that I can only name a few here, as they have oriented my thinking toward Woolf's writing, without committing to a larger history of pastoral criticism altogether. Annabel Patterson's *Pastoral and Ideology* (1987)

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[4] We remain indebted, however, to Williams for the glib snark of "where poets run scholars follow…" (18)

provides an ongoing and fruitful rationale for reading Woolf's pastoral poetics as driven in part by a crisis of political patronage. These ideas resonate most strongly in Chapter One and Chapter Three. Kathryn Gutzwiller's *Theocritus' Pastoral Analogies* (1991) deserves a brief mention here for the brisk and formal-oriented analysis of pastoral and pastoral criticism she provides, as well as for the rich classical world of her readings which has broadened my understanding of pastoral in both structure and historical context. Paul Alpers makes an essential and wide-ranging contribution in the pages of *What is Pastoral?* (1994) which offered my first and surest footing in pastoral's long conversation, and also as an invaluable first interpreter for me of Schiller's *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (1795-96). And yet, despite chapters on "Pastoral Novels," "Pastoral Narration," and "Modern Pastoral Lyricism" in his landmark study, Alpers does not mention Woolf once. Thomas Hubbard, who enters pastoral's critical contest with *Pipes of Pan* (1998) motivates this project not only by suggesting a study of pastoral might be made through notions of "intertextuality" and "literary filiation" (7), but also by his insistence that pastoral has been the chosen form of "young poets…aspiring to assert their manhood in the agon of poetic memory." (6) Considering the deeply ironized anger Woolf expresses in the cadences of *A Room of One's Own* and in *Three Guineas*, along with the aforementioned assertion that had her own father lived "he would have been the death of me," Woolf may have approved of Hubbard's recapitulation of pastoral's pleasance as a quest to slay poetic fathers. Yet her deep devotion to pacifism and her commitment to a specifically women's writing that might emerge by "thinking back through our mothers" necessitates the most

powerful displacement of Hubbard's phallocentric claims for pastoral and poetic memory I can imagine. The entirety of this dissertation's first chapter explicates the incursions Woolf makes on the green fields of patriarchal provenance in *A Room of One's Own.*

Of the above, Renato Poggioli's claims for pastoral resonate with a strength and sympathy most familiar to Woolf's own pastoral imagination. Perhaps, it is because Poggioli and Woolf share free-ranging literary intelligences, deep anti-fascist convictions, and a recognition that a pastoral of the Left is possible, if only conceived "in terms of a nonviolent resistance" expressing "the temper of a passive and ethical anarchism." (30) Such a goal seems to inform the very fabric of Sally Pargiter's character in *The Years*, as well as to define the end towards which Woolf's *Three Guineas* reaches and which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three. Likewise, the impulse that motivates Poggioli to translate the pastoral reverie of Hans Castrop in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* as "the day dream like apotheosis of each and every denial of the Western imperative of action" (14) evokes an aspect throughly Woolfian in its tenor and aims. Such denials of cultural utility and heroism manifest in Rhoda's recurring visions and refusal of intersubjective experience in *The Waves*, and in moments of intensified individual aesthetic experience in *The Years* that themselves suggest the possibility of alternate social configurations. These ideas drive readings in the Chapter Two and in Chapter Three, respectively. Lastly, but not least, a common garden grows between Woolf's aims and ambitions for her Society of Outsiders defined in *Three Guineas* through her reading of Coleridge: "To find a form of society

according to which each one uniting with the whole shall yet obey himself only and remain as free as before" (222), and in the readings of Rousseau threaded throughout Poggioli's book.[5] Both show solitary pastoral reverie to be aligned with concepts of freedom and liberty that might challenge the prevailing moral order of contemporary society. This last idea surfaces and recurs in all three chapters of this current project and provides the germ for an as-of-yet unfinished fourth.

The versions of pastoral outlined in the paragraphs above both include and exceed the initial premise of this project: that Woolf utilizes a pastoral mode in her writing as a critique of male-coded literary frameworks. Indeed, emerging as it does, from a Late Victorian/Post-Romantic intellectual context, and an education in history profoundly influenced by her study of the French Revolution and her reading of Thomas Carlyle, Woolf's pastoral thought partially answers to the function Lore Metzger defines for nineteenth century English pastoral poetry in *One Foot in Eden* (1985): "To articulate radical ends of social reform attenuated by conservative means." This is at least true in Woolf's development of a narrative method attentive to the expression and transformation of individual consciousness. Although she is often caught between an effort to claim and rewrite pastoral conventions toward a specifically female experience of liberation and aesthetic pleasure or accomplishment and the protracted doubt that the pastoral ideal might be beyond the possibility of transformation, one understands in reading Woolf that she overwhelmingly pursues a

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[5] Woolf in her own footnotes to *Three Guineas* cites Coleridge's own reading of Rousseau.

progressive, even radical, pastoral vision. This vision is rarely uniformly utopian, neither purely idyllic nor nostalgic, but always problematic, at times offering in its articulation, a doubled pastoral consciousness like the one Theodor Adorno describes in *Minima Moralia*:

> Even the blossoming tree lies the moment its bloom is seen without the shadow of terror; even the innocent 'How lovely!' becomes an excuse for an existence outrageously unlovely, and there is no longer beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding to the possibility of what's better. (25)

Extreme in its assessment of an existence proscribed by the atrocities of WWII, and in which beauty has been absorbed by the culture industry, Adorno's meditation likewise describes an entanglement with the modern world in which one may only find hope by objectively and resolutely facing its horrors, and solidarity by denying the pleasures of an easy sociability. What are the possibilities for aesthetic experience in the wake of horror, and how are these experiences crucial to new ontological possibilities? These are precisely the circumstances embraced by Rhoda, as she walks through London, in *The Waves*, contemplating the flowering bough rent with lightening in the wake of Percival's death. They are likewise, the truth that Woolf's letter writer turns to face in *Three Guineas* when she describes the task of her Society of Outsiders to shroud the human mind in darkness, and to be "suspicious of labels," even those of Justice, Equality, and Liberty, as "they kill and constrict" (163). Yet Woolf shows herself to be

exceedingly capable of holding these contrasts of beauty and terror simultaneously.[6]

In reading the *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, Woolf lauds the possibilities of the pastoral imagination in the creation of new realities:

> And yet the life that we invent, the stories that we tell, as we sink back with half-shut eyes and pour forth our irresponsible dreams, have perhaps some wild beauty; some eager energy; we often reveal in them the distorted and decorated image of what we soberly and secretly desire. Thus the Arcadia by willfully flouting all contact with the fact, gains another reality (*The Common Reader*, Second Series, 41).

To my knowledge, unlike elegy, Woolf never professes to write pastoral, even as she lays claim to its *locus amoenus* for women writing and stages an occupation of its dialectics and discourses. In its philosophical modes and wild contradictory beauties, the changing shapes of pastoral for Woolf never constitute a full renunciation of public life, but rather the attempt to lay claim to a better one. In *The Oaten Flute,* Poggioli writes that "pastoral poets leave the theatre and the agora, to cultivate…their own garden where they grow other flowers than those of communal myth and public belief…" (4) In writing this dissertation I have come to the conclusion that Woolf recommends leaving both the limelight and the marketplace, precisely in order to grow the flowers of communal myth and public belief— or rather to grow them, again,

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[6] It is perhaps with this in mind that Olive Heseltine cavalierly writes of Woolf in the *The Daily News* in 1925: "Rarely in one mind is found an equal measure of two diverse and usually conflicting qualities, but in these pages northern austerity is shot through with Latin gaiety, a marriage of true minds ensues consummate between a wood-nymph and a don."

differently, as Shelley recommend's in *A Defence of Poetry,* so that the flower may "spring again from its seed" (514).

In this dissertation, I read Woolf's engagement with the changing shapes of pastoral in the decade between 1928-1938. The pages that follow include individual chapters on *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and *The Waves* (1931), and one combined chapter on *The Years* (1937) and *Three Guineas* (1938). In them, I argue that Woolf utilizes pastoral modes to frame large scale ideological concerns with artistic subjectivity, feminist historiography, and national belonging. In this endeavor, Woolf's self-consciously-deployed pastoral poetics function as critical social theory. In each chapter, I identify a feminist poetics for Woolf that intervenes at both institutional and individual levels of significance. On the institutional level, Woolf largely uses forms of pastoral to demystify female subordination and to challenge its imbeddedness in the British cultural imaginary. On an individual one, she proposes pastoral experience as an agent crucial both to self- and societal transformation. Following the protean forms of Woolf's pastoral poetics is also to practice a similar kind of pastoral wandering, moving from projects of recovery to futurity through sustained close readings of her novels and essays:

Chapter One, "Out of the Heart of Spring," offers a double reading of Woolf's pastoral trespass on the green lawns of patriarchal provenance in *A Room of One's Own.* From the ecstatic musings in Woolf's diaries regarding the opalescent clouds and the pale gold haystacks that attend its conception and writing and its initial scene of poetic contemplation by the river "in fine October weather lost in thought" to the

very last moments in which her speaker calls for the labor that constitutes its own overturning, *A Room of One's Own* commits to pastoral tropes, conventions, and possibilities to ground Woolf's call for artistic parity. Here, I read *A Room of One's Own* as actively engaging and revising pastoral's privileged spaces of literary production. Paying particular attention to pastoral elegy as a mode of literary inheritance historically congenial to the male poet, this chapter addresses the ways in which Woolf uses pastoral to produce, explore, and authorize female artistic subjectivities in figures like the garden at Fernham and the fictive Judith Shakespeare. In adopting the itinerant persona of Mary Beton, drawing on a long history of women's sexual exploitation and through a practice of citation and quotation, Woolf turns the essay's idyllic spaces toward a process of recollection, repetition, and performance of women's voices that gives figuration to a history of their losses. By also staging an occupation of the various sites of aesthetic pleasure traditionally associated with the pastoral idyll, Woolf proposes an intermittently joyful and liberating vision for the possibility of women's writing and intellectual freedom that draws from and transforms the male coded literary frameworks that have largely excluded them for their force.

In Chapter Two, "Et in Acadia Ego," I follow the fate of this pastoral vision from the orderly quadrangles of Oxbridge and the rooms of the British Library into the broader socio-cultural context of *The Wave*s. In a reading that addresses England's history of colonialism and the subjectivizaton of its white cultural elite, I argue that Woolf's writing placing pressure on the cultural utility of the pastoral idyll and

problematizes the value conferred or imparted by pastoral convention. In so doing, I situate my reading of pastoral in *The Waves* in relation to other scholars such as Jane Marcus, who reads the novel as a critical and parodic encounter with empire and the elegiac frameworks that support it, and Jed Etsy who identifies the intimate, even essential relationship between pastoral nostalgia and imperialist rhetoric in modernist fiction, and against those who would read the novel's lyrical interludes either naively as nature, itself, or as providing the consolations of a natural imaginary. By offering close readings of the novel's lyrical interchapters as antipastoral allegory, I set up a discursive frame by which to evaluate the varying subjectivities of the novel's speakers. By likewise paying specific attention to the novel's treatment of its female speakers and the conditions of their legibility, I interrogate the role Woolf assigns to pastoral as it participates in the creation of oppressive ontological categories subordinate to patriarchal purviews. Lastly, I turn to a reading of Rhoda as a pastoral elegist, in order to query Woolf's own investment in the possibilities of social transformation and poetic renewal.

In Chapter Three, "Incarnadine The Willows," I explore the shared genesis of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* in the abandoned novel-essay *The Pargiters,* along with Woolf's stated ambitions to author a project that would "take in everything, sex, education, life" in an effort to claim for women a delimited expression of ontological experience. *The Pargiters*, with its alternating chapters of essay and fiction, was to provide an dialogue between two modes of truth-telling—one aligned with the heroic enterprise of overcoming sexual oppression with the granite of fact, and the other,

allied with a pastoral promise of aesthetic pleasure that might likewise organize both sociability and community. I begin by reading the pastoral structures in *The Years* as proposing the conditions of relationality for the men and women in its pages. In a close reading of the double pastoral narrative of the novel's 1914 chapter, I develop two contrasting experiences of pastoral rapture: one experienced by Martin Pargiter and the other by his cousin Kitty Lasswade. Despite the differences suggested by class and gender in the subject position of the two cousins, I argue that within the moments of aesthetic experiences provided by *The Years* pastoral frames, Woolf imbeds the possibility of reconfigured ontological understandings, which Woolf, in turn, places in tension with material and historical circumstances that constrain their actualization. I then direct my attention to *Three Guineas* for a reading of their shared pastoral aesthetics and the way in which Woolf's essay reconfigures these same aesthetics toward a radical social vision driven by emancipatory aims.

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Lastly, missing from the current iteration of this project is an epilogue that return us to the concerns of pastoral as a plausible vehicle for Woolf's historiographic writing, taking up the role of pastoral poetics in configuring community. The decline of imperial politics and the continued threat of European fascism in interwar England pressurized and lent urgency to pastoral as a redeployed metaphor for a nativist cultural identity. In *Anon*. the lyric voice that breaks the silence of the forest begins as a communal impulse out of a mythic green world; although always allied with the interests of collective life, Anon is nevertheless an outsider whose articulation of

common experience depends on his alienation from it. This ideal outsideness paradoxically authorizes Anon's voice as the necessary instrument of English life and ipseity, as an expression of national character whose source draws from both landscape and language. In the tension between a nascent "I" and emergent "we," what begins as an anonymous singing voice from the woods of prehistory becomes bound to historical continuity and national self-imagining. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf offers competing historical forms rooted in pastoral convention in the country house location of Pointz Hall and in the village pageant-play staged by Miss La Trobe. The country house, as the putative site of communal harmony, stands as a vestigial emblem of a conservative social and political order sustained by colonialism and class stratification, while the outdoor pageant-play, as a popular dramatic form imbedded in folk consciousness, offers a potentially transgressive vision of historical discontinuity and fragmentation which nevertheless aspires to inscribe a collective ethos within or through pastoral modes. The very possibility of community, however, is called into question by the quasi-solipsistic individuation experienced by the novel's characters as they inhabit its overdetermined pastoral locales and the refusal of the landscape to reflect back a unified or common understanding of 'being'. This last and missing chapter might read *Anon* and *Between the Acts* in the context of the pastoral overdetermination that is both the burden of its history and the (im)possibility of its reconfiguration…

CHAPTER 1

"OUT OF THE HEART OF SPRING": VIRGINIA WOOLF'S PASTORAL REVOLT

> "I have the feelings of a woman," says Bathsheba in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, "…but I have only the language of men." From that dilemma arise infinite confusions and complications. Energy has been liberated, but into what forms is it to flow?
>
> —Virginia Woolf, "Men and Women" (1920)

Autumn of 1928; the very end of October. In her diary Woolf records floods of rain on the other side of a "gay active summer," the "finest, and not only finest but loveliest summer in the world" (D3:198) The country had been "clear and bright" with "opalescent" clouds and "long barns on the horizon mouse coloured; the stacks pale gold." Virginia Woolf had just returned from Burgundy where'd she spent seven glorious days with her lover Vita Sackville-West "running up & down, irritably, excitedly restlessly." The days "flashed by" (D3:199). She had finished *Orlando* that summer, publishing the fantastical biography and love letter to Sackville-West on July11th and was enjoying its unanticipated success; meanwhile in London the scandal surrounding Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* and its fate was coming to a head. The lesbian *Bildungsroman* had also appeared in July but to a different fate. Savagely denounced as moral poison in *The Sunday Express* and seized by authorities, the *Well* would shortly stand trial for obscenity. Leonard Woolf and EM Forester had written letters in its defense and, although, enamored with neither the novel's literary merits

nor its author, Virginia and Vita would both attend the trial to speak for it on behalf of the freedom of aesthetic expression. Jane Harrison, classicist and scholar of the dark mysteries of Greek culture and the wild feminine was gone—dead and buried that spring. A bird had sung "most opportunely" and with "gay indifference" the day of her burial (D3:181). Time passed.

Against this backdrop, Virginia Woolf delivered two invited talks at Newnham and Girton Colleges at Cambridge on the topic of "Women and Fiction" that would later become *A Room of One's Own.* Throughout their composition and delivery, Woolf fretted about the rhetorical structure of her talks and about their reception. She was, characteristically, at turns exhilarated and exasperated by her topic. "Again, instead of writing O[rlando]. I have been racing up and down the whole field of my lecture" (D3:175). She doubted her ability as a lecturer ("I can't bear lecturing it takes ages and I do it vilely" (L3:543) and ultimately about how the students "starved but valiant" had received her words ("I felt elderly & mature. And nobody respected me…" (D3:200-201). Yet, when she sat down to turn her talks into the extended essay form the following spring, 1929, she experienced a rush of creativity at odds with her report of the lectures themselves. She describes the fluidity and suddenness of her creative state like a possession: "It made itself up & forced itself upon me…as I lay in bed after Berlin. I used to make it up at such a rate that when I got pen & paper I was like a water bottle turned upside down. The writing was as quick as my hand could

write…" (D3:222)[7]

The eponymous argument of the essay is well known—so well-known that in the ninety years since the publication of *A Room of One's Own* it has come, both through its sheer iterability and historical usage, dangerously close to being a catachresis. The lyrical manifesto, which stresses the importance of material and cultural resources to the development of women writers, has energized successive waves of the modern women's movement and remains perhaps the watershed essay for the development and practice of feminist literary criticism in the western canon. Its sometimes aphoristic expropriability has generated thousands of shorthand variations and puns rendering Mary Beton's famous room almost ubiquitous as Hamlet's mortal musings in their portable appropriations.[8] For all that, *A Room of One's Own* 's cultural ubiquity may not serve it. Our familiarity with Woolf as a major modernist figure and erstwhile feminist icon along with the easy didacticism of its title and the optics of sexual equality in twentieth and twenty-first centuries sometimes undercuts the complicated and radical poetics that occupy its compositional space. For, in addition to exploring the possibility of a literal and figural space for women writers within a literary tradition dominated by men (the *Women and Fiction* of its original compass) the scope of Woolf's essay also names the impediments to the existence of the woman

[7] Woolf describes a similar state while writing *Orlando*."…once the mind gets hot it can't stop; I walk making up phrases; sit, contriving scenes; am in short in the thick of the greatest rapture known to me…" (D3:161)

[8] In her introduction to *A Room of One's Own* Susan Gubar calls these "axioms or zen-like koans" from "a womb of one's own" to "A Room of One's Clone" (lix); See also Brenda Silver's *Virginia Woolf Icon* (1999)

writer: sexual difference grounded in the material realities of women's bodies and their ties to child-rearing, the lack of institutional patronage and support for women both in the professions and in public education, and the intense commitment of patriarchal authority to excluding women from systems of power and to maintaining its privileges—a commitment she implicitly and presciently links to gendered violence within the household and with imperialism and fascism as its most extreme expression.[9]

The linkages between the Victorian household and fascism find fuller expression in her later works, particularly in *Three Guineas* (1937) and *Thoughts on Peace During an Air Raid* (1941), but they are already strikingly present in *A Room of One's Own* and in her fiction from this time. It is in *A Room of One's Own* that Woolf vehemently asserts that the faces of a world order which insists on the inferiority of women belong to Mussolini and Napoleon and that an entrenched myth of male superiority can be maintained only through women's enforced silences—by preventing the material and ideological conditions that would foster women as speaking and writing subjects and by barring their entrance into a language and praxis that would establish them as reshaping the very order that has kept them poor, dependent, and servile. England, she declares is "under the rule of a patriarchy" and *A Room of One's Own* is largely devoted to representing that patriarchal force as a discursive problem with historical and materialist roots and, given this, to querying the possibilities for

[9] Dishearteningly, these remain ideas whose expression unfortunately appear radical even in the present day political landscape of the twenty-first century.

female subjectivities to emerge through writing.

Thus situated, Woolf's essay anticipates and falls within the purview of post-structuralist feminist theories particularly regarding the ideological condition of language and the symbolic order as always conditioned by phallocratic law. In *This Sex Which is Not One*, Luce Irigaray writes : "Women's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to masculine systems of representation which misappropriate her from her relating to herself and other women." (85) Similarly, in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Hélène Cixous writes: "woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds…" Both observations evince the understanding that as a subject under signifying systems which take the phallus or maleness for their given value, "woman" is exactly that which can neither be heard nor read, and further that the resulting ontological expression of such a signifying systems is one that alienates women from their own bodies, experiences and, significantly, from each other. Consequently, both Cixous and Irigaray will call, in their own ways, for a writing of and by the body generated by women's experiences which might liberate different signs, different modes of signification, and ultimately different subjectivities altogether. Although, more explicit in their calls for a language that emerges expressly from the intricate and varied geography of women's sexual pleasure and the autoerotic grasp of women's own gratifications, the concerns of both Irigaray and Cixous are not far afield from a Woolf

who, in *A Room of One's Own,* not only calls for sentences more suited for "women's use" and books that might "be adapted to the body" but also tries sentences on her tongue and, in her eponymous room, stages a scene of her own compositional autoeroticsm through the figuration and exploration of an androgynous mind. Others have written at more length on the connections between Woolf and psychoanalysis, the feminist tradition, and *écriture féminine*. The body of Woolf criticism is vast and varied, but what these alliances retrospectively clarify is that, grounded in a call for material patronage and institutional support, the problem of the woman writer, for Woolf, is also a problem of literary form. *A Room of One's Own*, as a call for female authority inevitably asks what are the conditions under which the woman writing might be heard? And in the absence of an answer, how might those conditions be created?

I. Female Voice / Pastoral Form

On the eve of its publication in 1929, Woolf's private concerns about the reception of *A Room of One's Own* echo these tensions as they evoke the simultaneous necessity and near impossibility of an authoritative female voice being both heard and taken seriously. She writes, "It makes me suspect there is a shrill feminine tone in it which my intimate friends will dislike. I forecast, then, that I shall get no criticism, except of the evasive jocular kind…that the press will be kind & talk of its charm & sprightliness; also that I will be attacked for a feminist and hinted at for a sapphist… but I wrote it with ardor & conviction" (D3:262). Woolf's ambivalence about her own authority speaks volumes about the double-bind of the female subject caught within a

cultural context defined by hetero-patriarchal norms. The female subject must navigate between her own feminist rhetorical concerns and historically male defined aesthetic standards. On one hand, she expresses concern about the force of her ideas, that her attempt to claim both material space and a tradition for women writers will be unpalatable and offend the sensibilities of her friends, who included the various artists, writers, and critics of the Bloomsbury circle. This offense manifests not as an ideological affront but, rather, as an assault on taste, as a violation of cherished social and conversational norms. On the other, she forecasts that in the larger cultural purview, she will not be taken seriously enough—either because the more traditionally feminine qualities of her writing, the "charm & sprightliness" of her prose which might conform to a more traditionally gendered sense of aesthetic judgement, leads to an appreciation of its decorative qualities over its emancipatory claims or, poignantly, because she seeks to measure the terms of women's writing in the context of other women writing, which of course would make her a strident "feminist" or a lesbian "sapphist." Woolf anticipates a reprisal for transgressing the figure of feminine consolation and amiability within her personal sphere and a public response that marginalizes her voice by either locating within it the very suffocating femininity she seeks to overcome or by branding it with a sexual difference meant to hollow out and

undermine the authority Woolf's writing seeks to establish.[10]

These charges reverberate in late 20th c. readings of Woolf's strongest feminist critics and allies. Elaine Showalter, while leaning on Woolf's legacy to birth her own "gynocriticism" famously takes Woolf to task for *Room*'s narrative techniques describing them as "impersonal and defensive" (282) "teasing, sly, elusive…refusing to be entirely serious" (284) burdening Woolf's writing with an aestheticism that undercuts its feminist import. In an essay deeply devoted to detailing Woolf's personal rebellion against the patriarchal and imperialist legacies of the Stephen family, Jane Marcus unintentionally resurrects the old bogey of aesthetic appreciation and attributes to Woolf's lyricism an evasive and defensive strategy meant to "seduce and solace" the male reader, and to "hide her feminist impulses" so as to better "plant darts at the patriarchy" (78) from behind the "skirts of her narrators." Naomi Black recapitulates this same sentiment when she writes that a "charming and lucid persuasiveness endears *A Room on One's Own* even to those readers who might have trouble with some of its practical implications." Black explains *Room*'s "indictments" and "ordeals" away as "fables" and "myths" further devaluing the essay's argumentative strategies on the basis of pleasing qualities (115). As Toril Moi has observed, even when in support of Woolf's feminism, critical perspectives in the

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[10] Woolf's dual anxieties about the *A Room of One*'s *Own* personal and public reception echo disconcertingly in the drawing room criticism of her brother-in-law, Clive Bell, who months after its publication jovially baits her into inviting his criticism of her work and diminuates its significance precisely on the grounds of its homosocial address and its scholarly ambition: "[its] jokes [he said] were lecture jokes. ' Girls come round me'—too much of that—little ideas—nothing to compare with *Orlando*" (3:275)

Anglo-American tradition display a tendency to separate politics from aesthetics, a pursuit which often precludes recognition of Woolf's textual practice as itself inherently political. Citing Woolf's "conscious exploitation of the sportive and sensual nature of language" (139) she advocates for readings of Woolf's work along lines suggested by Derridean deferral and Kristevan notions of the subject-in-process. She is followed by Mikiko Minnow-Pinkey, Emily Dalgarno, and Jane Goldman, among others, who variously pursue Woolfian aesthetics in service of psychoanalytic, materialist, and feminist interventions.

I offer that the formal and aesthetic dimensions of *A Room of One's Own*, which include the lyrical flourishes and pleasing fables to which both Marcus and Black refer, the shifting perspectives which so angered Elaine Showalter, as well as the biographical and historical context of its composition, belong to a self-consciously deployed pastoral mode which Woolf inscribes with thorough-going feminist concerns. My reasons are as follows: As one of the oldest lyrical forms in the western literary tradition, pastoral, particularly in its classical form, takes as its object the virtuosity of the (historically male) poetic voice. The most trenchant and basic of pastoral conventions pervade Woolf's essay from front to finish: a self-consciously adopted literary persona shaped by citational practices, a *locus amoenus* or peaceful place conducive to leisure or *otium*, a pathetically responsive literary landscape that mirrors the emotions of its poetic speakers, narrative exegeses based on themes of excursus and return, and a practice of literary inheritance based on the conventions of mourning. As the first stage in a Virgilian model of authorship, and one developed

largely through historically androcentric paradigms, pastoral provides a reasonable and obvious ground for feminist poetic occupation.[11] *A Room of One's Own* generates its call for women writers and space for women's writing within a conspicuously elaborated pastoral frame embodied by a highly literate female speaker. The essay itself "half talk half soliloquy" (D3: 221) exhibits tensions between writing and speaking endemic to classical pastoral forms while also offering an allegory for the female subject in confrontation with a classically male symbolic order. Further, if a significant portion of pastoral's indispensability as literary form inheres in an ideological saturation which places it at the productive center of various world-making capacities, then contestations for pastoral might also rightly be called contestations for a privileged mode of literary production. *A Room of Own's Own*, in the metapoetics of its feminist address and its engagement with signifying systems of sexual difference, appeals to conventions of pastoral and pastoral elegy in order to imbed and naturalize women's love for each other and themselves within textual practice—-an appeal that Woolf enshrines as part of the process of the becoming subjectivity of the "woman writer" and implicitly offers itself as a counter to patriarchal hegemony in its discursive forms. Read as pastoral, familiar figures such as the room of Woolf's title, the garden enclosure of Fernham, Judith Shakespeare, and the androgynous mind, not only authorize alternative subjectivities for the female scholar and writer but also contest the means by which pastoral achieves its historical significance, which is often

[11] See Jane Goldman's *Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf* (2001)

through the absence and exclusion of women or their sexual exploitation. In staging this contest as a fundamentally pastoral engagement with literary history, *Room* takes its place as an instance of Kristevan revolt—-that is "a pulverization and the reconstruction of meaning…by which meaning is opened to its genealogy and rebirth."[12]

Woolf commits to the methods of pastoral as aesthetic form inscribed by feminist concerns in the opening lines of *A Room of One's Own*:

> But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction—what has that got to do with a room of one's own? I will try to explain. When you asked me to speak about women and fiction I sat down on the banks of a river and began to wonder what the words meant. (1)

The essay's overture brings together, metonymically, the modal concerns of its inquiry. Gender and genre appear under the parameters of "women and fiction." Prospective places of literary generation emerge out of both "room" and "river." Woolf's preoccupation with semantic intention gets expressed as "what the words mean…" As alliterative allies, "river" and "room" mediate between gendered form and meaning, both promising the requisite tranquility and contemplation necessary for philosophical inquiry and literary production—the elusive *locus amoenus,* of pastoral idyll. Further, in placing herself by the river, she fixes the scene of this contemplation with one of the oldest taxonomic emblems for the lyric poet : a self within a landscape transmuting an ecstatic and solitary experience of nature into art and language. Delivered casually,

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[12] "The Revolt of Mallarme" (33)

this emblem nevertheless encodes a resonance both mythic and masculine of any number of Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Shelley or Keats reaching back through any number of pastoral figures, like Hesiod or Comatas initiated in the mysteries of the Hippocrine stream.[13] Woolf complicates the mythic possibilities of this pastoral space by progressively anchoring its realization to material contingencies throughout the essay. In chapter one, what begins as "a room of one's own" becomes, by the end, "five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door." In their stated specificity, the money and the lock are crucial conditions for any woman who wants to write, in a primary sense, because they secure for her the actual space in which to produce. The power to control space, to determine who goes in and who goes out, who interrupts and who doesn't is one not naturally enjoyed by women within the parameters of Woolf's essay. That imperative is given to various patriarchal authorities who lock up the treasure houses of Oxbridge and restrict access to their resources in the same way they lock up their daughters for refusing to marry. Even within the plausible homosocial space of her fictional lecture hall Woolf's speaker instructs her interlocutors to look behind the curtains for male interlopers before she can speak freely. In a text that is fundamentally structured by the very idea of enclosures, their prohibitions and their possibilities, the ability to claim freedom of ingress and egress has implications at the level of both politics and genre.[14]

II. Freedom to Wander / Freedom to Think

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[13] See also Leslie Stephen's "Sketches of Cambridge" for another rendering of this landscape.

[14] See Kamuf, Peggy. "Penelope at Work" (1982)

The ensuing six sections of *A Room of One's Own* follow the footsteps of Woolf's speaker through an overdetermined landscape in which she attempts to claim varying rites of passage with varying degrees of success. Her circuit takes her from the lecture hall through the grounds of Oxbridge, the garden and residential halls of Fernham, the reading room of the British Museum, her own library at home, the city streets of London and the nearby country roads. Her ambulatory progress through the essay is shaped by her promise "to develop…fully and freely" her "train of thought." (4) The itinerancy of her speaker and the digressive development of *Room's* theme evoke literary forms and epistemological practices native to classical philosophical dialogue and developed by pastoral lyric. Woolf's work in *Room* resonates in particular with the structure and themes of Plato's *Phaedrus* —three speeches framed as a walk from the center of Athens's urban space into the countryside where Phaedrus and Socrates explicitly foreground their progress through and situation in the landscape as part of their rhetorical exchange. The space in which they locate themselves, under a plane tree in the heat of the afternoon near the river Ilisus in a place dedicated to the river god and attendant nymphs, progressively exerts an effect on the nature of the speeches, their performance and their ultimate truth value. What begins near the city as Phaedrus's rehearsal of another's (Lysias) speech on desire and deception, becomes, by the end, Socrates's discourse on beauty, divine madness with particular attention paid to the "Bacchic frenzy of songs and poetry that glorifies the achievements of the past and teaches them to future generations," the movement of the soul, vatic or inspired thinking, the superiority of the dialectic, and

the love of wisdom.[15] In *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World*, Emily Dalgarno cites Woolf's preoccupation with both beauty and gender as part of an "historical struggle with language" that she locates in Woolf's study of *Symposium* and in *Phaedrus*; moreover Socrates's description of the lover's madness in *Phaedrus* becomes , according to Dalgarno, "disembodied androgynous desire in the image of solitary orgasm" (59). The sense of aesthetic rapture which Dalgarno finds in Clarissa Dalloway's desire for other women in *Mrs. Dalloway* (the "match burning in a crocus"), or in Mrs. Ramsay's ecstatic response to the beam of the lighthouse, or in Rhoda's anguish in leaving school in *The Waves* is available also in *A Room of One's Own.* The concerns of Plato's *Phaedrus*, present at the outset of her essay as a frame for philosophical investigation and poetic authority, returns in the garden of Fernham as the site of a liberated sensuality and poetically expressed same-sex desire, as well as in the privacy of the speaker's room in the consummation of her androgynous mind.

The promise of a "free and full" investigation, offered in the context of a speaking subject who cannot or does not own property and thus must wander in pursuit of knowledge, evokes the methods of the peripatetic school of philosophers who seek congress in common spaces.[16] As *Room* devotes itself to questions of

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[15] For more on Woolf and Plato's *Phaedrus* see Emily Dalgarno (2007), Krista Ratcliffe (1996, 2016), Loraine Sim (2005) and Charles Armstrong (2012). *Phaedrus* discusses the relationship between speaking and writing, one exhibited throughout Room—a tension likewise Ratcliffe observes and characterizes as "elegiac" in tenor.

[16] Meeting freely under the arches of the Lyceum as an analogy for intellectual exchange reflects also Woolf's sympathetic commitment to the "Common Reader" See also, Leslie Stephen's vigorous philosophy of thinking and walking.

writerly authority and the existence of women writers, the syntactic, semantic and narrative freedom performed, embodied, and experienced by its female speaker in her transit provides the stakes for articulating the possibilities of women's writing. Juxtaposed with contrasting privileges or experiences of space where women are variously locked out and locked in, where the horror of patriarchal control is expressed as a "lock on my mind," the freedom to wander links arms with the freedom to think and to write in pursuit of both beauty and truth. Requisite to Woolf's vision, then, the lock on the door affords agency to any woman seeking to control admission to the pastoral spaces necessary to philosophical contemplation and literary production. Five hundred pounds a year is no less crucial to this vision as it likewise provides emancipation from patriarchal control through their liberation from economic dependency and its accompanying psychic distortions. In *A Room of One's Own*, this emancipation comes to Woolf's speaker in the form of an inheritance from her aunt. Of this benefaction she writes:

> No force in the world can take from me my five hundred pounds. Food, house and clothing are mine forever. *Therefore not merely do effort and labour cease, but also hatred and bitterness.* I need not hate any man; he cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me. [emphasis mine] (37)

Her declaration of autonomy resonates with its fierce expression of material independence and with the consequences of self-sustenance—the end of labor and enmity. Her aunt has not only gifted her not only five hounded pounds a year in

perpetuity, but also freedom from a condition of emotional and material indebtedness created by women's subjection. The speaker's five hundred pounds a year is not just rent, it is a bucolic wish imbedded and inscribed within a paratactic assertiveness for an unassailable and enduring place of unimpeachable leisure, synonymous with pastoral *otium*; that this wish is granted and given material possibility by the figure of her aunt is made all the more significant because the inheritance sidesteps the fraught terrain of sexual reproduction Woolf cites as impeding the economic and educational development of women writers and artists.[17] "We have borne and bred and washed and taught," she elaborates "…the one thousand six hundred and twenty-three million human beings who are, according to statistics, at present in existence, and that" she says "…takes time" (110-111). Child-bearing and rearing precludes making a fortune or being a shipping magnate (Woolf's representative figure for industry fortune) and in 1928 for women to possess the financial resources and economic leverage to have created an institution even marginally on par with Oxford or Cambridge would, in Woolf's words "necessitate the suppression of families altogether" (22). At the time of *A Room*'*s* writing, women were allowed a public education at Newnham and Girton Colleges, yet still denied the conferral of a degree. Both women's institutions were founded in 1868, yet did not attain full university status until 1948. Woolf takes up this disparity in greater detail in *Three Guineas* wherein she details with striking clarity the history of and impediments to women's educational parity in Britain. In a *Room of*

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[17] More more on "tantulate" figures, "Greek Maenads and Victorian Spinsters" see Yopie Prins.

One's Own, Oxbridge stands in for and represents the University system as the space and symbol of a societally endorsed and protected plentitude hospitable to men—-which would have included those closest to Woolf, including her husband, father, and brother, as well as other members of the Bloomsbury Circle—and hostile to women, including Woolf, herself. Woolf's treatment of Oxbridge, and by contrast, Fernham, her likewise syncretic and obviously pastoral name for Newnham and Griton Colleges, thus also expresses a crisis of patronage along a gender divide. These contrasts are not only present in her speaker's differing accounts of the hospitality and board she enjoys at each institution (her account of lunch at Oxbridge is perhaps one of the famous in the English literary canon while Fernham barely passes muster with its prunes and custard), but also in her account of the spaces themselves, and in her embodied experience within their enclosures.

To Oxbridge she gives an evocative genesis as a pastoral landscape that lends itself to scholarly contemplation and production made possible by a patriarchal economic and cultural system antipathetic to women. As she describes its prehistory, Woolf's narrator assigns to Oxbridge an origin of almost mythic status as peasant pasture land. The unformed pastoral of Oxbridge's prehistory is transformed by the physical effort of a laboring class represented by men with their horses and oxen and by "an unending stream of gold and silver" where:

> lands were granted; tithes were paid… fellowships were founded; lectureships endowed…Hence the libraries and laboratories; the observatories; the splendid equipment of costly and delicate instruments which now stands on glass

shelves, where centuries ago the grasses waved and the swine rootled… (9)

The capital and cultural currency which produced and sustains Oxbridge originates in the "coffers of kings and queens and great nobles" but continues unbroken through the moment of *Room's* writing through elusively male channels of mercantilism, manufacturing and industry. The beneficiaries of this economic, educational, class and legal system in turn nourish the system that nourished them largely through donations, wills and inheritances. Oxbridge, founded on pastoral ground and developed through a quick narrative of georgic class exploitation, continues to be propped up by a patriarchal order so that it might sustain its originary, however modified, pastoral lustre. While *Room* repeats its refrain of grass and swine twice for emphasis, now at Oxbridge "the pavement [is] laid solidly over the wild grasses…Gaudy blossoms flower in window-boxes" (10).[18]

Woolf's begins the narrative itinerancy of *A Room of One's Own* in earnest by locating her speaker on the margins of these pastoral possibilities, unassailed as yet by Oxbridge's prohibitions; in this positioning, *Room's* speaker amplifies the tropes of poetic conventionality which attend the presence of a lyric speaker positioned in a natural world by adducing also to it a state of poetic rapture:

> Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please —it is not a matter of any importance) sitting on the banks of a river a week or two ago in fine October weather, lost in thought. (5)

[18] In addition to the reminiscences of Leslie Stephen for more pastoral metaphors for Oxbridge see Cuthbert Bede's *Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* (1858)

Positive temporal indeterminacy (“a week or two ago”) correlates with seasonal harmony (“in fine October weather”) and a protected status that enables her contemplative mood (“lost in thought”) such that her speaker’s corporeality becomes absorbed into the weather and landscape. As she continues to describe her surroundings as the site of natural splendor unanchored from a quotidian world, the *mis en scene* becomes explicitly and obviously pastoral:

> To the right and left bushes of some sort, golden and crimson, glowed with the colour, even it seemed burnt with the heat, of fire. On the further bank the willows wept in perpetual lamentation, their hair about their shoulders. The river reflected whatever it chose of sky and bridge and burning tree, and when the undergraduate had oared his boat through the reflections they closed again, completely, as if he had never been. There one might have sat clock round lost in thought. (5)

The bushes glow**;** the trees weep; a volitional river flows by turning her prose into iambs as it mirrors the forms “of sky and bridge and burning tree.” The willows, as traditional signs of mourning and anthropomorphized with hair about their shoulders, stand-in for the nymphs that attend the life and death of pastoral poets.[19] In this animated bucolic landscape, through which the undergraduate student is given fluent and unobstructed passage through the river’s reflections, the act of composing becomes as simple as metaphorically throwing a line into the stream and pulling up a

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[19] See also Psalm 137 :“By the waters of Babylon” for images of harps hung in the willows linked likewise to a history of an infanticide.

silver-fish-thought that subsequently darts around her mind. The rich world of pastoral plentitude likewise establishes Mary in a world of aesthetic experience that entails the loss of personal boundaries; her subjectivity becomes defined by a "wash and tumult of ideas" (5). Fished-up from the animate and golden landscape, the thought similarly animates the mind and body of the thinker. Mary experiences a seamlessness and wholeness between self and landscape that promises to be the site of poetic production and development. This variety of bodily unconsciousness is not unlike the controlled experience of Socratic inspiration described in *Phaedrus* under the plane tree in the heat of the afternoon, or the periods of compositional rapture Woolf details in her own diaries.

The possibilities of this rapture and its expression, however, encounter limits. Mary's unconscious autonomy and disembodied freedom are conditional. Grounded in the material and sexual constraints of woman's experience, the fish is tiny, yet given the fecundity of the landscape and her capable mind, generative. This generativity compels her subsequent movement through the landscape from the margins near the river toward the center of Oxbridge. The natural rapture she enjoys becomes conspicuously impeded when she is interrupted by a university official in the guise of the infamous Beadle, reframing Mary's aesthetic experience as a contest over rights of passage.

> It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and

> evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me…As I regained the path the arms of the Beadle sank, his face assumed its usual repose, and though turf is better walking than gravel, no very great harm was done. The only charge I could bring against the Fellows and Scholars of whatever the college might happen to be was that in the protection of their turf, which has been rolled for 300 years in succession, they had sent my little fish into hiding….What idea it had been that had sent me so audaciously trespassing I could not now remember. (6)

The Beadle, rising from the landscape with involuntary certainty to protect the green quadrangles of Oxbridge from the incursions of Woolf's speaker, brings to bear the impersonality of an institutional machinery opposed both to the passage of the woman writer and her pastorally induced poetic rapture. In a Blakean moment of "thou shalt not," Mary is barred from walking on the grass; this prohibition fatally disrupts her own fluency and the experience of pastoral symbiosis she achieves by the river. The Beadle's interruption of Mary's wandering not only provides a clear analogue to women's historical exclusion from the halls of higher learning, but this prohibition also literalizes the disruption of the semiotic drive in confrontation with the symbolic order.[20] Away from the disruptions of interfering Beadles, however, and keeping to the

[20] See Marie Laniel "The Name Escapes Me." (2014)

path, Mary resumes a momentum in harmony with her surroundings:

> The spirit of peace descended like a cloud from heaven, for if the spirit of peace dwells anywhere, it is in the courts and quadrangles of Oxbridge on a fine October morning. Strolling through those colleges past those ancient halls the roughness of the present seemed smoothed away; the body seemed contained in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate, and the mind, freed from any contact with facts (unless one trespassed on the turf again), was at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment. (6)

Moving through the orderly peaceful enclosures of Oxbridge, Woolf's narrator enjoys a second experience of transportive embodiment, which for the moment brackets any institutional interdiction. (The possibility of the prohibition itself, however, lingers as parenthesis.) Within her "miraculous glass cabinet" a protective transparent armor entombs Woolf's narrator, and envelopes her in a silence that suspends embodied interference and that precedes scholarly contemplation and a subsequent reentrance into language. She is thus established in a sympathetic but protected relation to the environment. The glass room provides freedom through its protective status. Her separate peace, however, is fragile. It could be broken by as simple a triviality as walking on the grass—-a trespass on the greens of patriarchal provenance. As such, Mary's glass cabinet provides an emblem of two contesting pastoral layers in Woolf's essay: her glass room suggests a pastoral possibility in its wholeness and transparency that is simultaneously contained within a larger promising and yet oppressively

pastoral landscape. The larger landscape ultimately belongs to the Dons and Fellows but not to the woman writer or scholar whom it excludes. The glass cabinet, by walling Mary in as its crystalline anchoress, provides an insulating pastoral wholeness within a larger landscape invested with patriarchal forboding.[21] Despite this moment's accord, an experience of an embodied artistic wholeness thwarted in its realization repeats itself when she turns toward the University Library where the manuscript of *Lycidas* is stored.

Meditating on the peaceful enclosures of Oxbridge and the essays of Charles Lamb, "flawed and imperfect but starred with poetry," kindles Mary's critical imagination and her intent to see Milton's poem. As might suit the wide-ranging mind of a scholar of literature and history, her ensuing torrent of thought includes Thackery's *Esmond* and its critical reception; she queries "which is style and which is meaning…" as she attempts to follow, quite literally, in Lamb's footsteps. Mary's admiration for Lamb's essays is evident in *A Room'*s reference to their "lightning crack of genius" (7) and in her assertion that "among all the dead….Lamb is the most congenial." (6) These sentiments are echoed in Woolf's diaries and letters, as she proves an admirer and ardent reader of Lamb in her early years. Lamb and his sociable

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[21] Pastoral ambivalence is further amplified and disrupted by the fact that situated thus Mary is also not unlike a specimen in a curio cabinet or an object of inquiry for nineteenth-century scientific practice—an analogy that finds its evidential support in the halls of the British Museum and reading room where she angrily encounters women relentlessly discussed as an object of inquiry by experts whose findings best might be distilled into an imaginary volume entitled "THE MENTAL, MORAL, AND PHYSICAL INFERIORITY OF THE FEMALE SEX." (31)

stylings may have provided a guiding for Woolf's *Common Reader*.[22] The object of her quest, however, is not the easy sociability of Lamb, but the patriarchal and paradigmatic poetry of Milton. For Woolf, Milton's pastoral elegy occupied a privileged place at the nexus of patriarchal authority and poetic desire. [23] In this case, the mode of Milton's poem is as important as its author's monolithic reputation. In *The English Elegy*, Peter Sacks writes "in its earliest conflictual structures, but also in successive adaptations of the eclogue form, the elegy clarifies and dramatizes the emergence of the true heir" (37). As one of English literature's most famous pastoral elegies, *Lycidas* stands in for the law of the Father by which the parameters of poetic succession might be set. Moreover, in addition to the influence of Milton's already considerable patriarchal provenance, "the essence of which almost all other poetry is the dilution" (D1:193), Woolf deeply associated Milton with her own father, Trinity fellow, biographer, and intellectual, Leslie Stephen. In Frederic Maitlin's *Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (1906) Woolf recalls that he used to read Milton to his children: "of the old writers he knew Milton best" and reflects that "…many of the great English poems now seem to me inseparable from my father." Of *Lycidas* itself, Woolf once said in conversation with Yeats that it was the one poem she could come back to perennially "unsated." (L3: Nov 1930). Of course, just as Mary cannot walk on the consecrated and protected green of Oxbridge, Mary cannot access Milton's

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[22] For more on Woolf's reading and use of Charles Lamb, see Joseph E. Riehls, *That Dangerous Figure,* 85-88.

[23] See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar from more on the "cryptic but crucial power of the Miltonic text and its misogynistic context" (92).

manuscript. Arriving at the library and opening the door, she is greeted by a figure who issues forth with all the mechanical certainty of a gesticulating beadle, "a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings." (7) Without the company of a Fellow or a letter of introduction, women are not allowed access to the library, a prohibition that issues forth kindly, the silvery edict of a deprecating patriarch. Mary, whose wide-ranging mind certainly qualifies her to make a contribution to literature's critical conversation, may be sometimes proximal to the enshrined word of the father and its "famous library" but never inside. As she returns to the autumnal weather for solace, Milton and his elegy remain monumentalized and inaccessible. Mary, like Eve, may know of the apple but she may not eat it.

III. Green Gardens / Greener Shades

In depicting institutional abundance, green quads and policed enclosures, *A Room of One's Own* repeatedly establishes pastoral as a powerful resource that is simultaneously available and forbidden to women. Mary's solitary experience by the river presents her as a fit vessel for poetic inspiration, but possibilities for that poetic expression become significantly checked as she moves more fully into the provinces of an institution complicit in the regulation of women's desires and sustained by the uses of women's bodies for empire and capital. Within the bounds of Oxbridge, Mary's poetic desire can only be understood as an alternation between a possible pastoral fullness and an actual institutional prohibition. Such poles clearly define the plight of the woman writer excluded from the riches of a literary tradition of which

Milton's *Lycidas* is both emblem and apotheosis. As Mary leaves Oxbridge for the evening, she observes gate after gate closing behind her and "innumerable beadles… fitting innumerable keys into well-oiled locks; the treasure-house…being made secure for another night" (13).

Mary experiences the possibilities of this pastoral currency quite differently when, returning fully nourished from her Oxbridge luncheon and buoyed on Christina Rossetti's verses from "A Birthday," she enters the grounds of Fernham, singing.[24] At Fernham, the solid quadrangles and regimented greens of Oxbridge give way to a fecund and unruly wildness of a different order that restores and intensifies the sense of aesthetic plentitude and potentiality experienced by the river. Flowers riot and colors flash, buildings become anthropomorphized ships with beating hearts, an October evening becomes a spring afternoon as Rossetti's lyric animates and transforms the landscape:

> "—-perhaps the words of Christina Rossetti were partly responsible for the folly of the fancy--it was nothing of course but a fancy--that the lilac was shaking its flowers over the garden walls, and the brimstone butterflies were scudding hither and thither, and the dust of the pollen was in the air. A wind blew, from what quarter I know not, but it lifted the half-grown leaves so that there was a flash of silver grey in the air. It was the time between the lights when colours undergo their intensification and purples and golds burn in

[24] "My heart is like a singing bird / Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;/My heart is like an apple tree/ Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit,/My heart is like a rainbow shell/That paddles in a halcyon sea;/My heart is gladder than all these/Because my love is come to me."

> window-panes like the beat of an excitable heart; when for some reason the beauty of the world revealed and yet soon to perish (here I pushed into the garden, for, unwisely, the door was left open and no beadles seemed about), the beauty of the world which is so soon to perish, has two edges, one of laughter, one of anguish, cutting the heart asunder. The gardens of Fernham lay before me in the spring twilight, wild and open, and in the long grass, sprinkled and carelessly flung, were daffodils and bluebells, not orderly perhaps at the best of times, and now wind-blown and waving as they tugged at their roots. The windows of the building, curved like ships' windows among generous waves of red brick, changed from lemon to silver under the flight of the quick spring clouds. Somebody was in a hammock, somebody, but in this light they were phantoms only, half guessed, half seen, raced across the grass--would no one stop her?--and 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? All was dim, yet intense too, as if the scarf which the dusk had flung over the garden were torn asunder by star or sword--the flash of some terrible reality leaping, as its way is, out of the heart of the spring. For youth—-" (17)

Shelley Saguaro calls literary depictions of garden spaces "diachronic multi-determined trope[s]." Victorian garden spaces were frequently rendered as shorthand for a domesticated Arcadia or Eden, a romanticized feminine sphere, or a symbolic

space that might catalyze and cultivate a developing moral relation to the natural world. This diachronic overdetermination is no less true of the range of gardens and gardening across Woolf's oeuvre—although, as liminal territories mediating between country and city, garden spaces in modernist renderings become, as Saguaro suggests following Raymond Williams, sites of "an unresolved division and conflict of impulses" (297). Further, these ideological oscillations enliven any readings of garden spaces that would resist easy assimilation to archetypal resonances. Woolf's own history with gardens and gardening is complex. While Woolf herself was only moderately involved in the practice of gardening, many of those she loved, including her mother, Julia Prins, sister Vanessa Bell, husband Leonard Woolf, and lover Vita Sackville-West were avid and ardent gardeners. She derived particular enjoyment (and occasional exasperation) from her and Leonard's gardens at Monk's House, writing often in a lodge situated away from the house where the garden space provided her with natural vistas for contemplation. As a young woman, Woolf was prescribed gardening as a stay against her depression—a pastime that took her away from her preferred library time and which she gleefully abandoned to Vanessa every chance she got. Nevertheless, detailed descriptions of garden spaces and keen observations of the natural world permeate her diaries and letters; gardens and parks appear in rich and dynamic ways in almost all of Woolf's major novels and in many of her short stories, as well. Of this span, Bonnie Scott Kime writes: "… we may find such censored subjects as sexual awakening, same-sex attraction, bodily and mental trauma and resistance to patriarchal patrolling of boundaries, as well, as delight in observation and

pursuit of freedom" (72).

In *The Hollow of the Wave*, Kime gives *A Room of One's Own* a brief reading in relation to its placement of early women writers such as Margaret Cavendish and Annie Finch in "solitary sad retreats" of their gardens (82) and a fleeting contextualization of Fernham's role in Woolf's essay as violating "the rules of realistic representation" with "stirrings of the imagination" as compensation for the silverfish thought she loses at Oxbridge. While it is certainly true that a vital prosopopoeia infuses the garden at Fernham offering Mary aesthetic consolation for the prohibitions she's encountered at Oxbridge, a fuller range of interpretive possibilities along lines already suggested by Kime also avail themselves. Mary's return from lunch—fully sated—-and the animation of the space by Rossetti's poetry progressively perform the enacted fruits of Woolf's thesis. Materially nourished, fed by words of another woman poet, and offered an enclosure sympathetic to women's experience, Mary's speaking voice yields easily to a lyrical prose and stream of consciousness much more akin to Woolf's fiction. An unexpected wind blows into the garden inspiriting "half-grown leaves" encouraging an association between Mary's arrival and literary awakening. The brimstone butterflies announce themselves alliteratively and with an onomatopoetic density as they ride the wind's errancy. Brimstones (*Gonepteryx rhamni*), generally among the earliest butterflies of spring, illustrate the theme of nascent seasonal change. Moreover, the very name "butterfly," with a folk etymology based on the butter color of the brimstone's wings, recovers a prelapsarian sense of communion between language and nature. Thus, these harbingers of spring suggest

Fernham as place of linguistic inception where tensions between poetic inspiration and the possibility of its articulation dissolve. In this garden, poetry bodies forth not only as potential but a way of happening.

Mary's entrance into the garden also explicitly restores us to the concerns of *Phaedrus* in its dialectic relation to the beauty of a world caught between laughter and anguish, between a revealed immutable truth and its arable decay. Much as Woolf's speaker first places herself on the margins of Oxbridge, she scores her entrance into the garden as a possible interruption within the parameters of its aesthetic concerns: "(here I pushed into the garden for, unwisely, the door was left open and no beadles seemed about)…" (16) Her ingress at Fernham, contained as it is in parenthesis along with the specter of an interfering beadle, tenders not a rupture or dissolution of the scene but exposure to a wider geography of its pleasance. This "wild and open" space permits unkempt grass and unruly daffodils and bluebells that strain toward motion, themselves, tugging at their own roots laboring to be free. Woolf's text realizes the promise and possibility of motion in the transformation of Fernham's edifices from stationary brick to "generous waves" and in the fantasy of free passage as, barely even apprehended by Mary's senses, phantom women race across the green. The startling and surreal occurrence of "ships' windows…under the flight of quick spring clouds" literalizes in Fernham's garden the fertile oceanic mind found as a central consequence

of Andrew Marvell's green lyric "The Garden."[25]

In "The Garden" Marvell develops pastoral ease and literary invention through the exclusion of women from its enclosures. The garden's green world provides the speaker with a respite from the laborious pursuit of worldly honor and sexual love; he renounces and reduces figures of female sexuality in service of this quietude, substituting instead his subsequent surrender to the erotic delights of the garden itself and his ensuing compositional ecstasy. The female figures of myth that do appear in the poem, Daphne and Syrinx, themselves the targets of unwanted sexual pursuit, find their best ends as laurel leaves and reeds—rendered as objects instrumental to the process of male poetic creation. These exclusions are inducements to the speaker's own sensuous poetic rapture. Overcome by the garden's fecund fruits and vegetal excesses, the speaker retreats further into a powerful poetic state of mind comparable to the ocean. This oceanic mind not only circumscribes all the shapes of a known material world but surpasses them in its inventive and creative capacities. In this compelling compositional state he experiences the sublimation of world and imagination to a singular experience he describes as "a green thought in a green shade." The distillation of the phenomenal world to a simplified pastoral relation between mind and nature precedes the speaker's transcendence, as, in moment of

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[25]"Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending there,
Far other worlds and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade."

enacted poetic expression, his soul becomes a silver winged bird, flies upwards and sings. If, building on Alice Fox's observation, that along with other Renaissance writers, Marvell's lyrics "were a permanent part of Woolf's mind"[26] (69), then Woolf certainly would not have been deaf to the significance of this "happy garden-state" and *hortus conclusus* scripted as an exclusively male site of poetic ecstasy and bodily transcendence. Nor would it be out of character for her to push against its perfect design in her description of Fernham's mazy errancy. Indeed, in the flash of silver and grey of Fernham's leaves and its refraction of colored lights we catch the echo of Marvell's bird as it "waves in its plumes the various light" of worldly aesthetic experience. In contrast, however, to *The Garden*'s solitary and ensnared male figure, Fernham's garden teems with women who race around freely and tarry in hammocks. Mary's observation of their half incorporeal and phantom states calls attention to the fact of their embodiment rather than away from it. These figures of protean liminality —of half-grown leaves and forms "half guessed half seen" at twilight—augment both the aura of temporal and spatial dislocation created by the scene's sudden seasonal shift and its creative capacities. As she has claimed from the outset of the essay to be working in and through fictional modes, Mary's arrival at Fernham conveys not so much a violation of established representational norms but a sea-change in the rules of representation themselves; the anthropomorphic malleability of Fernham's garden communicates that everything in it is on its way to perhaps becoming something else.

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[26] See also "Woolf and Andrew Marvell: The Gendering of Modernism" Woolfian Boundaries: Selected Papers from the Sixteenth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf. Ed. Anna Burrells, et al.. Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital (2007) 30-35

Mary's fleet questioning "—would no one stop her?—" aligns Fernham's homosocial female enclosure with a burgeoning sense of momentum and freedom denied to both Marvell's speaker and to Mary when she is outside its confines. Unlike "The Garden," in which the goal seems to be poetic creation through stasis, the separation of soul from body, and the ultimate praise of the Gardener whose design the speaker apprehends and enjoys, Fernham celebrates disorder, volition and community with all the vitality of "an excitable heart." In this context, the garden gate "perhaps unwisely" left open lingers as an ironic ambiguity, for whom would or should it exclude? Is its purpose to lock in or lock out? The unsecured door exists as both the possibility of admission and exclusion and yet it remains suggestively unlocked. Under the auspices of such a permissive chaos, in its fecund and unruly openness, Fenham's garden threatens to lift off and sail away in search of "other worlds and other seas." (Marvell)

In Woolf's depiction of Fernham, the traditional or archetypal referent of gardens as gendered and plausibly Edenic space mentioned by Saguaro and warned against by Williams inheres; but what counts as easily symbolic in this space is complicated by feminist imaginings. Onto more conservative, and arguably misogynistic, ideas of garden spaces and feminized sexuality, Woolf maps a more progressive vision, committing Fernham's enclosed wildness to an explicitly female counter public sphere and its creative prospects. In resisting Marvell, *Room* shifts the signification of garden enclosure toward female achievement and solidarity driven by

female desire.[27] These pursuits are alluded to in specific and important ways at the end of the passage. The first emerges in the oblique figure of "J—- H—" popping out to take the air, and the second in the passage's closing allusion to Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness*. The apparition of "a bent figure, formidable yet humble, with her great forehead and her shabby dress" materializes as literary tribute to the spirit of late Classics scholar Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928). [28]

Importantly, the last words of Fernham's garden passage gesture, in a moment of allusive transposition, to yet another garden—this one from Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness.* Hall's novel chronicles the life and loves of Stephen Gordon, an upper-

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[27] In *Upon Appleton House* see also the poet and fisherman and his interruption by Maria which wrests pastoral bliss away from the fisherman / poet and turns the poem toward Maria in stanza 82. The interruption of sexual love into scene of male communion with nature mirrors the prohibiting beadle of Oxbridge and Mary's disruptively sexed body—a connection strengthened by the beadles (non)reappearance in the garden at Fernham.

[28] Famous classics scholar and central member of the Cambridge Ritualists, Harrison was among the first students admitted to Newnham and Girton Colleges.Upon leaving Newnham she worked and studied at the British Museum in the Department of Antiquities, gaining a reputation for being a dynamic lecturer on art and archaeology. She published as a journalist and, as a working academic without university affiliation, received honorary degrees from the University of Aberdeen (1895) from the University of Durham (1897). She returned to Cambridge in 1899 to a longterm lectureship at Newnham where she continued to publish, changing the face of Greek Studies with her emphasis on folk ritual and Dionysian mysteries. Jane Harrison never married, but throughout her life she savored intense intellectual affinities with men and women alike. According to biographer Mary Beard, she fell "repeatedly, volubly and unsuccessfully in love." ()The biggest romantic disappointment of her adult life may have been the marriage of Francis Cornford to Frances Darwin, the daughter of Harrison's longtime friend Ellen (Crofts) Darwin, and yet she spent the last fifteen years of her life with former student and collaborator Hope Mirrlees. She knew at least thirteen languages, including Greek, Latin, German, French, Russian, and Hebrew. (Robinson, 3). In many ways, Harrison was Britain's first female academic in a fully professional sense and rightly a scholarly forerunner and creative intellectual peer to the ambitious Virginia Woolf. Woolf associated Victorian Hellenism and the study of Greek culture with institutional privilege and authority. Her own private greek lessons with Clara Pater and Janet Case gave her access to a version of rhetorical and cultural authority from which she otherwise felt excluded. The ghost of "J—— H—-" speaks to Woolf's friendship, rivalry, and long-standing admiration for Harrison who died in April of 1928 and to the possibilities of female intellectual endeavors as professional pursuits.

For more on Woolf's Hellenism see Virginia Woolf's: "On Not Knowing Greek"; Theodore Koulouris, *Hellenism and Loss In the Work of Virginia Woolf* (2001); Emily Dalgarno *Woolf and The Visible World* (2001)

class English "invert," the fleeting joys she finds and the impediments both internal and external to her happiness as she moves from the green, landed enclosures of her family's rural estate, Morton, to the metropole of Paris, where she eventually seeks acceptance in a more moral modernity and in the vocation of writing. Hall's novel, rife with the difficulties of self-knowledge and social alienation associated with the life of the invert, reaches a tragic apotheosis in her relationship with Mary Llewellyn a Welsh woman with a "Celtic soul" she meets while driving an ambulance during WWI in France. While ultimately, Stephen renounces her dream of happiness with Mary, they first consummate their burgeoning love in an interval of romantic idyll in the Canary Islands, Tenerife, in the port town of Orotava. Arriving in Orotava, Mary and Stephen find themselves fully in a world of pastoral romance. Oxen wagons brimming with fruit fill the port's grassy cobblestone streets as does the laughter and song of those who sell it. The ancient stone house to which they retreat from the horrors of the war, the Villa del Ciprés, sits high on a hill, named after its cypress trees and overlooking the sea. Although older than the other villas in Orotava, the Villa del Ciprés still wears bright green shutters and stands apart from this commerce. Its grounds are maintained by two men, the young Pedro who unfortunately falls in love with Mary and older savvier Ramon; the house is kept by a woman named Concha and her daughter Esmerelda; the venerable villa's origins even fade into a myth of pastoral ease with a caretaker who cares less for details of its history than he does for dreaming in the sunshine "of satisfactory commissions." (277) Mary and Stephen spend their time in Orotava ambling through the mountains and woods, being serenaded by beggars,

watching herdsmen and listening to “the tinkle of goat-bells breaking the stillness.” (281)

Within this world of obvious pastoral abundance, the garden at Villa del Ciprés dominates the landscape. Replete with sexual promise, the garden’s enticements are nevertheless troubled by a paradisal fantasy that codes desire as both phallic and plausibly perverse:

> …one glory the old house did certainly possess…a veritable Eden of a garden; obsessed by a kind of primitive urge towards all manner of procreation. It was hot with sunshine and the flowing of sap, so that even its shade held a warmth in its greenness while the virile growth of its flowers and its trees gave off a strangely disturbing fragrance. These trees had long been a haven for birds, from the crested hoopoes to the wild canaries who kept up a chorus of song in the branches. (277)

For Mary who harbors an unmitigated ardent affection for Stephen, this manifested Eden becomes the site of extreme longing and possibility; for Stephen, who reciprocates Mary’s love but is tortured and jaded by her own expectancy of the brutal social interdiction that condemns same-sex love, the garden is simultaneously saturated with queer promise and the site of prohibition. While Stephen looks at Mary with “uncertain and melancholy eyes,” Mary turns to the scenery with “wide-eyed pleasure” (277) to encourage and endorse their love. By day, the pastoral country-side of Orotava likewise conspires to overcome Stephen’s restraint by enveloping them in a landscape traditionally dedicated to lovers and by night Stephen is tormented by the

tantalizing and forbidden prospects of blissful domesticity with Mary. As a liminal space mediating between pastoral country-side and the intimacies of home, the garden at the Villa del Cirpés commingles an exotic Nature that authorizes and endorses their desires and a more austere symbolic order that threatens them:

> Outside in the garden there was luminous darkness. The night had a quality of glory about it, the blue glory peculiar to Africa and seen seldom or never in our more placid climate. A warm breeze stirred the eucalyptus trees and their crude, harsh smell was persistently mingled with the thick scents of heliotrope and datura, with the sweet but melancholy scent of jasmine, with the faint, unmistakable odour of cypress. Stephen lit a cigarette: 'Shall we go out, Mary?'
>
> They stood for a minute looking up at the stars, so much larger and brighter than stars seen in England. From a pond on the farther side of the villa, came the queer, hoarse chirping of innumerable frogs singing their prehistoric love songs. A star fell, shooting swiftly earthward through the darkness.
>
> Then the sweetness that was Mary seemed to stir and mingle with the very urgent sweetness of that garden; with the dim, blue glory of the African night, and with all the stars in their endless courses, so that Stephen could have wept aloud as she stood there, because of the words that must not be spoken. For now that this girl was returning to health, her youth was becoming even more apparent, and something in the quality of Mary's youth, something

> terrible and ruthless as an unsheathed sword, would leap out at such moments and stand between them. (279)

While Stephen attributes to Mary's youth the necessary repudiation of their love, the "unsheathed sword" of Stephen's imagination nevertheless lingers as a phallic expression of Stephen's own desire and like the flaming sword at the gates of paradise. Meanwhile, the sky, initially welcoming to the would-be lovers in its "blue glory" and more luminous stars becomes a projection of Stephen's internalized condemnation. Confronted with the generous sexuality of the African night and its innumerable fornicating frogs, the prehistoric love song instead evokes a specter of Judeo-Christian judgement. In a bifurcation of pastoral signification, the shooting star both blesses lovers under the firmament and warns against yielding to a pagan eroticism that correlates with an abject or fallen state. For both Stephen and Mary, time spent tracking the heavens coldly substitutes for the consummation of their desires. Eventually, Mary's bright-eyed persistence and Orotava's pastoral copia overwhelm Stephen's objections, and, despite her fears of censure and damnation, their initial interval at the Villa del Ciprés ends with a triumphant declaration of unity: ". . . and that night they were not divided" (284).

The lesbian Bildungsroman, published roughly around the same time as Woolf's *Orlando,* was on trial for obscenity in the fall of 1928, the same season in which Woolf delivered her talks on *Women and Fiction* and Newnham and Girton. Variously members of the Bloomsbury cohort, including Woolf, had been called upon in its defense on aesthetic grounds. Of the defense of the book with respect to its

literary merits, the magistrate presiding over the case, Sir Chartres Biron is recorded as having said: “The more palatable to poison the more insidious… These unnatural offenses which are the subject of this book involve acts…that between men would be criminal…acts of the most horrible unnatural and disgusting obscenity.”[29] It was found guilty and ordered destroyed on November 16th ,1928. As Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands observes : “…Judge Biron’s negative assessment of the novel was caused largely by *The Well*’s recourse to a naturalizing discourse that, in fact, elevated Stephen above the obscenity with which, in his view, the invert should be associated.” Despite her own feelings of aberrancy and self-loathing, Stephen maintains a moral relation to and sympathy with nature that endorses her as the worthy heir to a noble British masculinity and, moreover, moves the lives of “inverts” and lesbians from the margins into the center. In some ways, this move towards cultural authorization more than the mere fact of women loving each other constitutes the real threat of Radclyffe Hall’s novel.

In its vespertinal final moments, Room’s garden passage pays homage to the ambivalences, tensions, and revolutionary potential evoked by the *Well of Loneliness* and the garden at the Villa del Ciprés. Jane Marcus reads Woolf’s allusion to Hall’s novel as a politically motivated effort to keep both lesbian texts and lesbian desire in print.[30] Marcus likewise recognizes the same imperative in Mary Beton’s reading of fictional writer Mary Carmichael and her novel “LIFE’S ADVENTURE” as Beton

[29] Hull Daily Mail – Friday 16 November 1928

[30]See Jane Marcus, “Sapphistory: The Woolf and The Well,” *Lesbian Texts and Contexts* (1990)

breaks off discussion of Carmichael's sentences to ask:

> Are there no men present? Do you promise me that behind that red curtain over there the figure of Sir Chartres Biron is not concealed? We are all women you assure me? Then I may tell you that the very next words I read were these —'Chloe liked Olivia...' Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women. (80)

In its reference to both the magistrate who banned *The Well of Loneliness* and to the quotidian intimacy of Chloe and Olivia, *Room* conspires likewise in the enterprise to legitimize sexual subjectivities that threaten the status quo. But, while the garden at the Villa del Cirprés remains a site of contested signification, Fernham's enclosure mobilizes its "nature" in service of resignification. Wresting "star" and "sword" from their punitive ambivalence they are instead turned into the crest of a new order. Woolf's metalepsis gives both "sword" and "star" their full allegorical weight bringing them to bear on oppressive patriarchal structures that seek to regulate women bodies and the expressions of their desires—ripping back dusk's "scarf" to reveal a "terrible reality leaping" in mysteries that might be esoteric knowledge, embodied carnality, or both.

Through its figural language and allusive engagement with pastoral forms, a mythopoeisis devoted to intellectual and creative endeavors driven by female desire encompasses the dialectical play of *Room*'s garden. While Oxbridge exists as the spirit of peace, scholarly contemplation, generational wealth, fabulous meals and policed

enclosures, Fernham, as a women's college, offers itself as a sanctuary simultaneously marked by generative possibility and comparative paucity. The sources of this poverty, as the subsequent conversation with Mary Seton and closing section of chapter one confirms, are women's limited economic prospects and the compulsory professions of marriage and child-rearing that find themselves at odds with women's artistic and literary production. As Jane Harrison writes in her own memoir *Reminiscences of a Student's Life:*[31]

> By what miracle I escaped marriage, I do not know. For all my life long I fell in love. But on the whole I am glad. I do not doubt that I lost much, but I am quite sure that I gained more. Marriage, for a woman at least, hampers the two things that made life to me glorious—friendship and learning…Family life has never attracted me…I like to live spaciously but rather plainly, in large halls with great spaces and quiet libraries. I like to wake in the mornings with the sense of a great, silent garden all around me…" (88)

In its ideal iterations, the promise of pastoral is time and space. For Jane Harrison these pastoral possibilities signaled companionship, intellectual commerce, contemplation, and community life. For Radclyffe Hall's hero Stephen Gordon and her lover Mary Llewellyn the pastoral idyll provides time for love and an authorizing landscape for lesbian desire. In its title and its central conceit, Woolf's *Room* circumscribes the temporal and material resources of literary production within its

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[31] Jane Ellen Harrison's memoir was published Leonard and Virginia at the Hogarth Press in1925 and certainly read by Woolf.

pastoral compass, situating the most authentic poetic possibilities for women within spaces free from prescriptive channels of a domestic heteronormative sexuality. In so doing, it generates an economy in which the company and patronage of other women is necessary to the development of any women's literary ambitions. Such patronage occurs, certainly, in the form of material currency (Stephen Gordon is independently wealthy and heir to a great house while Jane Harrison's lectureship at Newnham sustained and nurtured her scholarship), but also in the unfettered circulation of women's desires—whether to love other women under a starry sky and to write about it, as the allusion to Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* suggests or in the sheer blossoming of women's self-propelled movement—the abandonment of running unchecked by patriarchal censure—across the green grass. The gardens of Fernham, the Villa del Ciprés, and Jane Harrison's scholarly imagination push back against Marvell's fantasy of solitary male pastoral ease suggesting other possibilities for green thoughts in ever greener shades.

If Woolf's commitments to pastoral topoi as the contested yet generative ground for women's writing are evident in the essay's protean figuration of room and river, garden and green, in the shape and shade of Jane Ellen Harrison as she haunts the garden at Fernham, Woolf moves to reengage the elegiac considerations of pastoral first introduced in the Miltonic text. When Mary is turned away from the manuscript of *Lycidas*, she is not only denied access to a valuable cultural resource but also obstructed in her effort to follow in the footsteps of the ever-congenial Charles Lamb, never mind Milton himself. The institutional apparatus that prevents Mary from seeing

Milton's poem is the same apparatus that denies her a place in its lines of poetic succession while simultaneously and symbolically denying her identity as a writer and artist, as well. As critic Celeste Schenck points out: "The masculine elegy is…above all a vocational poem." (13) Mary's anger as she descends the steps of the library vowing "never will I wake those echoes, never will I ask for that hospitality again" (8) is directed at cherished cultural institutions that privilege authorial self-identification as an exclusively male heroic enterprise. In conventional readings of *Lycidas* Milton, in his successful mourning of fellow swain Edward King, emerges from the gauntlet of grief (its own kind of pastoral wandering) with a triumphant bid for poetic immortality. As a woman, Mary descends the library steps bereft and angry. The beadle's prohibition calls attention to an enforced condition of intellectual poverty at odds with her obvious erudition; and further intimates that as a woman she has no tradition and, therefore, nothing to mourn.

IV. Performing Authority / The Right to Mourn

In one of the most important contributions to the twentieth-century study of the English elegy, Peters Sacks recalls that the "right to mourn was from the earliest times legally connected to the right to inherit." In petitioning for rights of inheritance, poetic or otherwise, a claimant must not only establish a public affinity with the lost but also "wrest his inheritance" from the self-same dead (37). Moreover, in the process of any successful mourning, the mourner must turn from the object of desire and loss to a sign that substitutes for the loss itself, a process by which grief is followed by an aesthetic compensation. Sacks takes as a paradigm for this process Ovid's tale of

Daphne and Apollo, identifying in Apollo's appropriation of the laurel leaf, a process of alternation and substitution by which a fragment of what was lost becomes a replacement for the unattainable and original whole. In diverting his erotic pursuit of Daphne into the consoling substitute of tree, leaf, and then wreath Apollo also accepts the metamorphosis of his desire.

On one hand, the practice of drawing forth currency from latent forms provides a useful analogy in thinking about Woolf's practice of citation in *A Room of One's Own*, particularly as it relates to a dominant literary tradition, pastoral or otherwise. For example, in the "innumerable beadles" locking up the treasure houses of Oxbridge with their "innumerable keys," Alice Fox identifies an echo of the innumerable bees and immemorial elms from Tennyson's long poem *The Princess,* and *Room's* reference to them as the vehicle for feminist argument through its "literary sensibility" () However, where Fox sees an ironic distancing evident in Mary's description of the college gates closing that mocks the marriage solution presented in Tennyson's poem, the appropriation takes on additional texture for this reading if we note that Tennyson's bees are the bucolic bees of the Muses that kept legendary herdsman Comatas alive in captivity, or that the lines from *The Princess* that Woolf parodies belong to Tennyson's pastoral interlude, "Come Down O Maid," within the larger narrative of the long poem that allegorically implores the Princess Ida to abandon her dedication to an exclusive community of women and learning for the promises of heterosexual union. Thwarted in her desire for a fulsome pastoral filiation, as represented in *Lycidas* or in the idyllic strains of "Come down O' Maid," Mary instead

takes as elegiac token a fragment of their implied plenitude and adapts it for a rhetorical purpose that is both a sign of her exclusion and a moment of self-inscription at the site of her original desire. Sacks's description of the work elegy performs in its renunciation and the redirection of energies toward an appropriate substitute aligns explicitly with Freudian paradigms of successful or healthy mourning. In this sense, Fox's feminist practice of allusion offers at least a partially adequate version of poetic loss adapted to the purposes of women writers.

Nonetheless, Sacks's model is not without problems for the female mourner; as he points out: " identifying with predominantly male symbols of consolation greatly complicated women's work of mourning" (13). Likewise, as Melissa Zeigler adduces in the account of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne, only Apollo's loss is accounted for and given figuration in a sign of consolation. In *A Room of One's Own*, what Mary makes intelligible in her moment of angry renunciation as she descends the stairs is that the plight of women writers is not one of uncomplicated mourning, but rather one of melancholia—a pathological cultural condition by which women are denied the plausibly appropriate object of their own losses.[32] The status of the aspiring female elegist or woman writer as defined by a condition of cultural melancholia is further complicated if, after Juliana Schiesari, we accept that within the history of melancholia itself there is a "hierarchal determination of who can legitimate loss and recuperate it, whose laments are heard and whose are not…melancholia as a gendered

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[32] For an example for the melancholic poetess Woolf draw on Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea

category can subvert women's own claims to loss and difference by making of women a group unable to translate these claims into artistic, philosophical, poetical or psychological empowerment…" (54-55). Schiesari's appraisal of melancholia's asymmetrical expression and cultural legibility echo in Woolf's concerns about the irrealizable authority of the female speaking voice, in her fear of a "shrill feminine tone" that might be at odds with "ardor and conviction." In an effort both to resolve this compulsory condition of cultural melancholia and to circumvent patriarchal interdiction *Room* petitions for its place in lines of literary succession through its forceful conventionality. This dynamic and transgressive drive expresses itself by returning perennially to women's outsider status and in metaphors of trespass while also performing an intimate knowledge of literature itself.[33] For example, the very thought that incites Mary's desire to see *Lycidas* and subsequent disavowal of patriarchal patronage germinates in a footnote of Lamb's "Oxford in the Vacation" — an essay she claims not to remember the name of. Yet, her recollection of the essay and its import is such that she can follow its contours straight to the library where *Lycidas* is kept. More than a display of "literary sensibility," the practice of allusion or feminist citation compels recognition of a specifically female authority through a split

[33] Evident in : "Literature is open to everybody. I refuse to allow you, Beadle though you are, to turn me off the grass. Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt, that you can set upon the freedom of my mind." Also her declaration of no country in *Three Guineas* and in "The Leaning Tower"

consciousness of being at once inside and outside the discourse of literary history.[34]

As we've already seen, the speaker's self-introduction as Mary relies on familiar poetic tropes to establish her within a traditional pastoral landscape, to evoke associated lyrical and philosophical possibilities, and to explore tensions between economic patronage and poetic output. In so doing, she demonstrates familiarity with the conventions of a dominant literary tradition and a willingness to adapt them to her use. Moreover, in the specific practice of literary allusion as defined by Fox, Woolf qua Mary shows herself, however marginalized, to be at least adequate to the task of a traditionally male-defined poetic mourning. Such a display, however, is not enough. In order to overcome the melancholia which silences, subdues, and distorts women's voices, Woolf's essay must also address itself to a specifically female experience of imagined authority that takes account of their losses. In the suggestive shade of Jane Ellen Harrison in her surrounding garden, Mary finds an elegiac analogue to the ideal of same-sex patronage suggested by her aunt's legacy. One solution, therefore, to the question of what might constitute the "appropriate" object for the female elegist, that is the object-loss withdrawn from consciousness to which women might turn to resolve their condition of cultural melancholia, is not the male defined lineage of pastoral poets but an alternate assemblage of female precursors that might enact the

[34] "If one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilisation, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical…"; For a discussion of narrative and strategies strategies relating to insideness and outsiderness of *AROO*, see also Judith Allen, Virginia Woolf and *The Politics of Language* (2010)

previously foreclosed mourning for unlived possibilities.[35] Moreover if we return to that same self-introduction, attending to the rhetorical construction of Mary's voice we see the parameters of pastoral elegy expand to admit the flexible figuration of female authority in Judith Shakespeare and the androgynous mind. If our first reading focuses on the elaboration of pastoral space with respect to the possibilities of female authority, a second one concentrates on the performance of female authority within that space, on the personae that remake the pastoral elegy in its aspect.

So, as fits the conventionally recursive structure of classical pastoral, we "begin again":

> Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please —it is not a matter of any importance) sitting on the banks of a river a week or two ago in fine October weather, lost in thought. (5)

Mary's authorial annunciation first appears as an oblique and puzzling impersonality. The syntactic disorder of her introduction calls attention to itself as both poetic formality and potentially confounded spatio-temporality. The ensuing repetition of "Mary"s refracts her chosen identity along an axis of plausible anonymity before tapering into the arbitrariness of "any name you please—" In the process, she progressively empties "Mary" of personal content, performing and ironizing the work of female self-effacement she, elsewhere in *Room*, imputes to the consequences of women's policed sexuality: "It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated

[35] See Judith Butler "unlived possiblities" in "Melancholy Gender / Refused Identification" (1995)

anonymity to women even so late as the nineteenth century" (50). As she introduces Mary, Woolf's speaker inscribes the anonymity and requisite chastity of her speaking persona with rhetorical understatement ("not a matter of any importance") —a gesture that implies virtuosity even as it evades specificity. The deictic that initiates this introduction situates its speaker both intimately and remotely, both "here" in a present address and "there" on the river banks where "here" brings the framing space of the women's lecture hall in line with both the moment of reading and the moment of poetic contemplation at the riverside, and, importantly, into the circuit of communication and homosocial currency that includes Woolf's room. "Here" echoes through those spaces in its deictic capacity, but also as a homophonic imperative in its call for auditors. The aesthetic distance first created by ironizing the speaker's identity consequently collapses in promised confidences. In this moment, Mary controls how a concomitant female authority might be heard, fashioning an allegorical speaking register that also commands identification with and complicity in its aims. Of her compositional choice Woolf later wrote to Ethyl Smythe: "I forced myself to keep my own figure fictitious; legendary. If I had said "Look here am I uneducated because my brothers used all the family funds which is the fact —Well they'd have said she has an axe to grind; and no one would have taken me seriously." (L5: 195) In her letter to Smythe, Woolf maintains the concerns she voices in her diaries about the forms proscribed for feminine voices. For critics disposed to reading a weakness of the aesthetic into Woof's essay, Mary's allegorical anonymity appears as conformity to a "decorous invisibility" or even as an appeal to a more authoritarian "dissociation of

sensibility." Showing herself to be acutely alive to the social dimensions of her fictions, however, Woolf advocates for narratorial dispersion as a specific rhetorical strategy. Moreover, she calls attention to it within the disordered prose of her annunciation and in the parenthesis that interposes itself between the declaration of self and its topographical contextualization. Woolf's allegorical and anonymous speaking voice is simultaneously populated by a deeply literary ethos in keeping with classical understandings of the pastoral poet as the reader of literary traditions, and burdened with a history of sexual persecution and the poetics of loss. As speaker, Mary performs a wide-ranging and classically legible erudition. She quotes Tennyson and Rossetti, knows the essays of Charles Lamb, where the manuscript of Milton's *Lycidas* is kept, that Thackeray's novel *Esmond* is considered by critics to be his best, and the names of female literary characters from Antiquity through the modern novel; she discusses Keats, Cowper, Sterne, Coleridge, Chaucer, Marlowe, Johnson, Proust, Tolstoy, Pope, Shelley, Max Beerbohm, Thomas de Quincey and works by Richardson, Congreve, Webster, Goethe, Rousseau, Donne, Swinburne, Browning… the number of male writers and public figures are almost too many to list efficiently. She simultaneously shows herself to be acquainted with the exceptional female faces already enshrined in the literary canon, in the guises of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Mary Mitford, and the Brontë sisters. The performance of this knowledge deepens in a project of critical reconstruction as she adds Margaret Cavendish, Annie Finch, Dorothy Osbourne, Eliza Carter, Fanny Burney, Joanna Baille, George Sand, Gertrude Bell, Vernon Lee, Lady Murasaki, Sappho, the contemporary novelist of her own

invention named Mary Carmichael, and the figure of “Anon” as the female shadow author of so many folk poems and ballads to her purview. She details the material conditions of their writing and attends to the shapes of their sentences. She insists on the importance of this female lineage and on the practice of mourning as essential to literary production:

> Without those forerunners, Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue. For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice. Jane Austen should have laid a wreath upon the grave of Fanny Burney, and George Eliot done homage to the robust shade of Eliza Carter--the valiant old woman who tied a bell to her bedstead in order that she might wake early and learn Greek. All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, which is, most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds. (65)

In the provisional peroration that ends this passage (“All women should let flowers fall…) she lays claim to the process of canon formation through death and memorial common to the dominant literary tradition. In the wreathes and falling flowers we catch also a reverberation of Apollo’s elegiac token while the “scandalous” burial of

Aphra Behn in Westminster Abbey anchors Mary's assemblage in proximity to the Poet's Corner—shrine of male authority and most visible symbol of patriarchal literary canon.[36] Gathering female poets, singers, playwrights, novelists, and diarists she establishes a self-selected register of women's speaking and singing voices as feminist convention.[37] She thus embraces a poetics of collectivity that outwardly populates the form of pastoral elegy with its feminist address. This use of pastoral elegy overtly satisfies the emancipatory claims of a female authored tradition that seeks redress in symmetry. Yet, while this conventionality mimes a tradition of male authored pastoral elegy it does little to transform generic expectations so as to allow for alternate subjectivities of the female elegist to emerge. While seemingly offering tantalizing opportunities for the woman writer, pastoral elegy in some ways remains a limited tool like Woolf's immanent critique of a language incompatible with women's histories: "a man's sentence; behind it one can see Johnson, Gibbon and the rest…a sentence… unsuited for a woman's use." (75)

As Celeste Schenck observes "the task of the male elegist reflects certain psychic models, which seem, in the revisionist elegies of women poets, to be inappropriate to…female experience." Writing on mostly but not exclusively contemporary women's funeral poetry she locates a "different set of internalized relations" (15) that mark out space for a specifically female elegiac tradition in which

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[36] See Richard Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past* (2001)

[37] In this characterization, I'm also thinking of Paul Alpers's reading of pastoral "convention" as rooted in *convenire* or coming together, a principle which subtends the poetic continuities found in traditional pastoral personae, ie.,Daphnis, Lycidas, Comatas, Corydin, Thrysis.

"alternative elegiac scenarios…arise from a distinctly feminine psycho-sexual experience." (18) Among the strategies of female elegists she finds both a poetics of collectivity and a refusal of poetic apotheosis. According to Schenck, female elegists define poetic identity largely on the refusal to leave their dead behind. In some ways, the melancholic Freudian identification that poses an impediment for the 'successful' male poet-in-mourning, becomes a paradigm by which the female elegist remains continuous with her dead by refusing to "re-figure loss as transcendence."[38] Of interest then is not only Mary's rehearsal of a classical elegiac form but a constitutive shift in the conventional values of the pastoral speaker and in the constitution of the poetic mourner, herself. As has been commonly and widely observed in Woolf studies, Woolf's selection of the various Marys of her speaker's allegorical identity derives from the anonymously authored sixteenth-century Scottish *Ballad of Mary Hamilton* or The *Fowr Maries*. The ballad itself tells the story of a lady-in-waiting, one of four Marys, who becomes pregnant by the Queen's consort, and leaves her child out to die either by drowning or exposure. The ballad sung in the first person, on the eve of its singer's execution, revolves around the refrain:

> Last night the Queen had four Marys,
>
> Tonight she'll have but three,
>
> There's Mary Beton and Mary Seton,
>
> and Mary Carmichael and me.

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[38] See also Lousie O. Fradenburg

It is fairly routine to note that Mary Beton, Mary Seton, and Mary Carmichael all appear in Woolf's essay as speaker, aunt, female fellow at Fernham, and fictionalized lady novelist respectively; or similarly to cite the litany of Marys as evidence of Woolf's claim that "Anon, who wrote so many poems without singing them, was often a woman" and simultaneously to graft the anonymous authorship of the ballad tradition to the poetic legacy of the woman writer. It is perhaps less common to observe that the ballad sung on the eve of her own execution for infanticide is a self-elegy in which the song's speaker, Mary Hamilton, refutes the fear of a "nameless grave,"39 or, finally, to regard Mary Hamilton as a structuring absence at the heart of *Room's* melancholia. While theories exist in abundance as to the origin and source of a real-life Mary Hamilton, some amalgam of the four ladies-in-waiting sent with the young Mary Queen of Scots to France, an unknown 'disgraced' chambermaid in Mary's court, and one Marie Hamilton, mistress to Peter the Great and handmaiden to Catherine I who was executed for abortion and infanticide in 1719 generally presents

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[39] "But why should I fear a nameless grave
When I've hopes for eternity
And I'll pray that the faith o' a dying thief
Be given through grace tae me" (*Celebrated Songs of Scotland: From King James V. to Henry Scott Riddell*, 40)

Alternately:
"Oh little did my mither think,
At nicht when she cradled me,
That I wad sleep in a nameless grave
And hang on the gallows-tree." (*Child Ballads*, 173)

itself.[40] Within these multiple historical and cultural possibilities, varying forms of female authority take shape. For example, taking into account various cultural myths attached to Mary Queen of Scots and her court enriches the constitutive allusiveness of Mary's persona. Mary Queen of Scots and her handmaidens were notorious for their allure, for cross-dressing, leading battles, performing in masques, hunting, hawking, dancing, playing music, sexual license and other potentially gender-destabilizing behaviors. Not surprisingly, Queen Mary, her mother Mary of Guise, and Mary I of England were the targets of a vitriolic pamphlet by Calvinist Reformer John Knox in 1558. *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* roundly condemns "this monstriferous empire of women (which amongst all enormities that this day do abound upon the face of the whole earth, is most detestable and damnable)"[41] As specifically female elegist, *Room's* Mary weaves the various fragments and strands of both sexual persecution and power together in the process of her own authorial self-making.

Deepening the productive absence of Mary Hamilton from the pages of *A Room of One's Own* as a site of transgressive and persecuted female sexuality is also

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[40] The story of Marie Hamilton in Russian history is fascinating, brutal, and bizarre. She was a descendent of a Scottish family who found favor in the Russian aristocracy. Sensationally rumoured that after the execution, the Emperor gave a lecture about her head's anatomy, kissed it, and it was afterwards preserved at the Russian Academy of Science.

[41] Or variously: "To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature; contumely to God, a tiling most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is die subversion of good order, of all equity and justice. " or "wheresoever women bear dominion, there must needs the people be disordered, living and abounding in all intemperance, given to pride, excess, and vanity; and finally in the end, that they must needs come to confusion and ruin.:

the connection of Woolf's Mary to the protagonist of Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband : Or the Surprising History of Mrs. Mary Alias Mr. George Hamilton* (1746). The fictionalized and anonymously published pamphlet which frames itself as a titillating story of "monstrous" and "unnatural lusts" draws on the story of another historical Mary Hamilton who was arrested and tried for impersonating a man and for fraudulently taking another woman as her wife. In real life, as in the pamphlet, Mary Hamilton is convicted and ordered publicly whipped in the squares of four market towns and sentenced to a period of hard labour.[42] Rounding out the allusive resonances, sexual strictures, and transgressive possibilities of "Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please," Jane Goldman passingly points out that 'Marie Carmichael' was the actual pen name of Marie Stopes, contraceptive activist and author of *Love's Creation* (1928) and mirror-text to the fictional Mary Carmichael's LIFE'S ADVENTURE; but where *Love's Creation* describes the romance of Kenneth and Lillian as they share a laboratory, Woolf substitutes a more provocative friendship in Chloe and Olivia.[43] In the collection of its Marys, *Room* evokes female authority in the ghostly figuration of disgraced, aberrant, prodigious, uncontained, and unapologetic female sexuality. These figures are variously tried,

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[42] The connection to Mary/George Hamilton is first made by Jane Marcus' *Sapphistry: Narration as Lesbian Seduction* (1987) but incompletely (and incorrectly) cited. For a rigorous and convincing account of Woolf's "Manx girl" her sexual exploits, and Fielding's plausible influence on *A Room of One's Own* see Vara Neverow's "Bisexing the Unmentionable Mary Hamiltons in *A Room of One's Own*: The Truth and Consequences of Unintended Pregnancies and Calculated Cross-Dressing" in *Contradictory Woolf* (2012)

[43] *The Feminist Criticism of Virginia Woolf*

prosecuted, punished, and executed under patriarchal law, and yet transgressively insist in excess of the law that seeks to regulate them. As mourner, Mary does not turn from her dead or their losses to a consoling sign; rather, she incorporates them, making them constitutive of her own poetic authority. Mary's pastoral erudition, therefore, co-exists with a legacy of vexed maternity, infanticide, and suicide. If the moment of Mary's self-introduction by the banks of the river rings with a faintly Hesiodic tonality, "Call me Mary" simultaneously echoes as a moment of reverse interpellation where the speaker of Woolf's essay asks her auditors to inscribe her with a history of women's psychosexual experiences—their violent prohibitions and their insurgent possibilities—in the moment of her poetic invocation. If Muses haunt the blessed quadrangles of Oxbridge and the banks of the Thames, their names are audaciously Mary.

In this ongoing melancholic intertwining of sex and death, prohibition and transgression Mary's narratorial ethos refuses elegiac consolation by abandoning neither its anger nor its attention to a violent history of women's oppression. She displays a repeated desire to remain constitutively and contiguously with her catalogue of dead writers, botanists, doctors, dancers, sovereigns, lesbians, sapphists, scholars, and outlaws by re-inscribing their presence/absence at the moment of pastoral initiation. This desire remains continuously circumscribed by pastoral's split signification as both promise and prohibition. Unrelenting in its assessment of the costs of childbearing and childrearing to women's artistic ambitions and to the possibility of same-sex patronage as represented by contesting pastoral ideals, *A Room*

of One'*s Own* returns recursively to the threat of heteronormative sexual attachments and mandates as a source of patriarchal control and interdiction. Yet, out of each return to the source of these interdictions, represented in *A Room of One's Own* through dominantly male-coded literary frameworks, Woolf fashions the opportunity for Mary Beton to turn those same frameworks toward moments of transformation for the "new" pastoral speaker. For example, out of the ambivalent marriage solution offered by Tennyson in *The Princess*, a poem Woolf invokes in her essay as a source of feminist anger, Mary will extrapolate the idea of the androgynous mind. The figure of the androgynous mind , for Woolf, likewise anchors the very possibility of female poetic greatness that she offers in the promised coming of Judith Shakespeare. The momentum for his sea-change in poetic possibility germinates in the pastoral lyric inset to Tennyson's long poem, "Come Down O Maid," as Princess Ida sits by the wounded Prince's bedside and reads the shepherd's plea:

> Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
> What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),
> In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
> But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
> To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,
> To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
> And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
> For Love is of the valley, come thou down
> And find him; by the happy threshold, he,

Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,

Or red with spirted purple of the vats,

Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk

With Death and Morning on the silver horns,

Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,

Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,

That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls

To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:

But follow; let the torrent dance thee down

To find him in the valley; let the wild

Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave

The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill

Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke

That like a broken purpose waste in air:

So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales

Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth

Arise to thee; the children call, and I

Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,

Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;

Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,

And murmuring of innumerable bees.

As Ida reads response to the proportion of marriage is not one of unmitigated joy, but instead deep sorrow. Rather than espousing and celebrating its nuptial bliss, the pastoral fantasy she ventriloquizes consummates in moaning doves and murmuring bees that forecast the end of her own pastoral fantasy of homosocial community and women's learning. The voice of the wooing swain disciplines and modifies Ida's primary desires for spiritual and intellectual commerce independent of sexual love. "Love is of the valley" she dutifully intones and does "not care to walk With Death and Morning on the silver horns." The movement of the virginal maiden from the high mountains and their cold and lofty solitude into the rushing glen of sexual promise is scripted as the inevitable *telos* of womanly development. Despite associating the valley's verdant promise with "the sons of men and barbarous laws" (284) Ida reluctantly complies with the pastoral song, subsuming both her ambition and autonomy in impending marriage and motherhood. The pastoral romance of "Come Down O Maid" for Ida is not one of seduction and sweet surrender but of submission to an essential femininity defined inescapably through its domestic contextualization. In *Come Down O Maid,* as in the garden at Villa del Ciprés and elsewhere in Woolf's essay, pastoral bifurcates in its significations. The valley teems with figures of personified companionship, of harvest and home while the mountains appear in figures of inhuman sublimity. In the valley, the promise of a life fulfilled by agrarian bounty conjoins with the imperatives of sexual reproduction, where both farming and sex yield the rewards of a joyful embodied labor practice. "Love" is to be found "by the happy threshold he, or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize." By contrast, the

alpine “splendour of the hills” offers only rock altars and vaporous funeral clouds. Unlike the concretely personified Love found in the valley, the lyric force of a “thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke / that like a broken purpose waste in air” turns on a vague similitude that aligns the maid’s solitary existence with insubstantiality and monumental ruin. The maid’s chastity, linked likewise through the larger poem to Ida’s own intellectual and spiritual freedom, is given in forms of remote romantic majesty, in “blasted pine” and “sparkling spire” too near the Heavens to be of any measure of a “real” human life. The ascetic pleasure of the mountain's “white ravines” and “firths of ice,” suggestive in their topography, speak to a frigid abnegation of the body more suited to the afterlife than to the life of a maid of marriageable prospects. However entrenched, the swain’s plea asserts, ice melts and runs inexorably, and perforce joyfully, if not coercively, down to the valley. Yet, the grief Ida displays at the close of her recitation suggests that she far prefers the power and purity of the glacial climes to the promise of the valley’s domestic enclosure.

In its resolution, *The Princess* attempts to heal the split in pastoral signification, and the gender antagonism presented in the poem more largely, with a renegotiated proposal of marriage. The Prince meets Ida’s self-recrimination and bereavement with a pledge to make Ida’s cause, and by extension, all women’s, his own: to “clear away the parasitic forms / that seem to keep her up but drag her down” (284). He offers compensation for her sorrow in a reformulated and progressive ideal of heterosexual union: “not like to like, but like in difference; / Yet in the long years liker must they grow; /The man be more of woman /she of man.” While the

outcome of homosocial pastoral may look like heteronormative georgic, marriage likewise must evolve. In the Prince's new version of the marriage compact, gender differences, while never dissolving their essentialist origins, will grow into " the single pure and perfect animal. The two celled-heart beating with one full stroke—Life!" The proffered solution to Ida's mourning for her autonomy is a turn toward marriage as a jointly modified habitus. In the two-celled heart, *The Princess* offers a new life-form as consolation for Ida's lost pastoral.[44] While Woolf's targeted appropriation of the murmuring bees for *Room*'s "innumerable beadles" may display, at surface, an ironic distancing from its male-authored source, both Tennyson's poem and Woolf's essay engage, on a demonstratively wider scale, the problem of pastoral as contested ground for female authority. In engaging both pastoral's promises and prohibitions, *The Princess* like *Lycidas* exists in a productive tension with *A Room of One*'*s Own* that changes the shape of and possibilities for both female elegiac consolation and poetic annunciation. These concerns are finally and inextricably evident in the figuration of *Room*'*s* Judith Shakespeare and the androgynous mind.

V. Waking the Echoes

Woolf's essay famously ends with a peroration to the young women seated in the fictional lecture hall of *Room's* horizon to labor "even in poverty and obscurity" for the return of "the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister." As an impossible figure for female poetic authority, the outlines of Judith take shape against the figuration of

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[44] Pastoral lyric often evidences marriage symbolism as a vocabulary of restored order. Se Milton's *Lycidas*, Virgil's Fourth *Eclogu*e, also.

Shakespeare’s own biography and ubiquitous literary and cultural provenance. In this, Judith is, if we are to take Harold Bloom seriously, like every other writer since the Bard took up quill and ink. Certainly, “Shakespeare” manifests variously in Woolf’s writing as fictional character, cultural touchstone, aphoristic source, patriarchal prop and personal Muse. In *Reading Virginia Woolf*, Julia Briggs writes of Woolf’s “difficulties with Shakespeare” as part of a “serenely absent-present” legacy with which she contends and a horizon through which she perennially articulates her own literary identity. In *A Room of One’s Own* his vivid textual presence manifests as both a legislative force that determines the fictional possibilities for female characterization and the model literary imagination which likewise sets the conditions, both ideal and impossible, for female authority. The former allows Mary to articulate the paradox she perceives in women’s existence: “Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history” (43)—and to query the dearth of women’s voices in the historical record. The latter leads her to project the conditions necessary for true literary greatness: “If ever a mind was incandescent, unimpeded,” she claims “…it was Shakespeare's mind.” (97) Woolf elsewhere similarly deploys Shakespeare’s “incandescent mind” as source of effortless visionary capacity and endless receptivity. In 1917, in *The Mark on the Wall* she sketches him as he sits staring into the fire while a "shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind" (104). In 1930, upon finishing *The Waves* she writes in her Diary: “… the pliancy of his mind was so complete that he could furbish out any train of thought;

and, relaxing, let fall a shower of such unregarded flowers." Indeed, she says "Why… should anyone else attempt to write?.. Sh[akespea]re surpasses literature altogether…" (D3:301)

In these figurations of literary plentitude, particularly in the mind that literally generates and scatters flowers, Shakespeare embodies the ideal pastoral topos of artistic and scholarly production; his own authority is fashioned in metaphors of pastoral abundance and reverie. Given Shakespeare's monumental cultural authority, it is tempting to cite this presence in *Room*, specifically, and in Woolf's writing more generally, through a patriarchal and institutional significance driven by the same prohibitions and strictures apparent in the grounds of Oxbridge and in the imposing figure of Milton. Woolf's use of Shakespeare, however, as a prohibitive pastoral form is complicated and enriched by metaphors of vatic pliancy and reverie not unlike the compositional ecstasies described by Woolf in her own writing process. The personal alliances and affinities Woolf expresses for an imagined Shakespeare along with her admiration for his writing troubles the unmitigated patriarchal location of Shakespeare's literary authority. In "Thinking Back Through Our Mothers" Beth Schwartz situates Shakespeare in a "maternal nexus" in Woolf's literary practice, arguing that in *A Room of One's Own* and in *Orlando* Shakespeare provides the "cornerstone" of a regendered feminist literary history. (723) In thinking of Shakespeare as "mother-muse," Schwartz asserts, Woolf wrests "Shakespeare" away from an Oedipal legacy and the internalization of patriarchal law and claims his authorial presence for the collectivity of women writers associated with "Anon," the

originator of pastoral song that Woolf ties to both women and the ballad tradition.[45] As the "master-mistress" trope of literary generativity, "Shakespeare" finds literary expression in a generative and unbounded and polymorphous creativity that exceeds sexual differentiation. When Woolf, searching for a model of writerly authority not marred by antagonistic gender difference, turns to Coleridge's pithy prescription "A great mind must be androgynous" (139) she maps the fluency and openness already located in the figure of Shakespeare's authority onto the space of sexual difference taken up and potentially transformed by the ideal literary imagination.

Mapped with and against Shakespeare, Judith Shakespeare is given all his potential and aptitude for literary greatness but encumbered with her female form. She is born with his "same grey eyes" with talent and passion and energy and the musicality of birds; she runs away to London on a summer's night rather than marry the son of a wool-stapler; she haunts the theatre doors in London begging for entrance and training in her craft; she has genius for fiction, and a lust for life and the study of human character; she initially resists the sexual insinuations of Nick Greene, the fat-lipped theatre manager of Drury Lane but finally and desperately gives in to his administrations of "pity;" she finds herself pregnant; she kills herself on a winter's night; she ultimately "lies buried at some crossroads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle" (48). As female figure to Shakespeare's ground, Judith Shakespeare points recurrently to the socio-cultural landscape explicitly

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[45] See also Woolf's unfinished "Anon" (1941)

antagonistic to women's literary and artistic ambitions. Her narrative likewise unfolds as an extreme allegoresis of Tennyson's *Princess*: Both Ida and Judith are blessed with talents and ambitions that exceed the roles reserved for them by patriarchal culture; both are threatened by the specters of heteronormative sexual prescription; both attempt to circumvent those prescriptions and fail. In attempting account for Ida's loss, *The Princes*s turns toward marriage for the figure of a restored and reformed order while *Room* stays with the imperative for women to control their own sexuality free from the dangers thus posed to them by that same order. In its abortive despair, Judith's ignominious end both refuses and is refused the consolation of a return to domestic harmony between men and women. *Room* does not, however, reject the conventions of Tennyson's marriage solution all together. In mourning Judith Shakespeare, Woolf turns toward the androgynous mind in language that clearly mimes the marriage solution and two-celled heart of *The Princess:*

> It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly… Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated. The whole of the mind must lie wide open…There must be freedom and there must be peace. Not a wheel must grate, not a light glimmer. The curtains must be close drawn. The writer, I thought, once his experience is over, must lie back and let his mind celebrate its nuptials in darkness. He must not look or question what is being done. Rather, he must pluck the petals from a rose or watch the swans float calmly

down the river…(103)

The experience and description of the androgynous mind endorses a male-bodied author who becomes feminized through the act of compositional eroticism. In the moment of post-coital bliss, he experiences a compulsory pastoral reverie threaded with the remnants of a decorous chastity. In this, *Room* responds to the marriage solution of *The Princess* by locating its doubly generative possibilities in one body. In embracing the queerness of a mind that marries itself, it also suggests a plausible consolation for Judith Shakespeare's un-lived possibilities: The Elephant and Castle where Woolf buries Judith is indeed, today, the site of an historic coach house and bus stop. "The Elephant" also has a fictive existence as the Inn at which Sebastian promises to meet Antonio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Sebastian is, if we remember, the twin brother of Viola/Cesario the play's androgynous cross-dressing heroine. Judith's grave, a place over-written by history and crossed by the traffic of an indifferent London, is simultaneously a palimpsest of literary history and the enshrinement of female authority at a site marked out by entanglements of sexual difference and same-sex desire—that of Antonio for Sebastian and Olivia for Viola/Cesario and Viola/Cesario for Orsino and Orsino for Olivia but also for Cesario/Viola and Viola/Cesario for her twin Sebastian, which is simultaneously the love of self and self as other. It is the unmarked grave site of a heroine who performs both a masculine and feminine self. Read as such, Judith is the obverse of William's own male-bodied androgynous mind located in the body of the female-artist. If the promise of literary production and generation is located in William Shakespeare's androgynous and

incandescent mind, it is already and always co-located in Judith.

As a pastoral figure for female poetic annunciation rather than renunciation, Judith Shakespeare takes up and transforms the prohibitions of Milton's *Lycidas* and the ambivalent pastoral of Tennyson's *Princess* into one underwritten by the play of psychosexual experience unmoored from heteronormative and patriarchal censure. In her promised return, moreover, as a product of women's work, Judith offers one final paradigm for female-authored elegiac form. As we've previously noted, Peter Sacks's model of poetic mourning relies on the narrative of Daphne and Apollo through which to both represent loss and to figure its aesthetic compensations. Celeste Schenk and Julianna Schiessari, among others, have responded by demonstrating the ways in which female authored elegies often refuse the idea of aesthetic compensation or of a mourning-process which attempts to transcend its dead. In *Beyond Consolation*, Melissa Zeigler instead proposes the classical pairing of Orpheus and Eurydice as a proto-myth for elegiac experience: "…elegy has retained a certain narrative focus on the key plot sequence of Eurydice's death, Orpheus's descent into the underworld, and the final turn that returns Eurydice to death while Orpheus lives on as the exemplary poet-mourner…" In its refusal to abandon Judith Shakespeare to oblivion, and in its insistence on the presence/absence of its pantheon of female mourners, *A Room of One's Own* performs the Orphic work of returning her to life through women's words through repetition and performance.

The coming of Judith Shakespeare constitutes a reversal and a displacement of Orpheus as the "exemplary poet-mourner," offering in its place figures of female

authority for *both* mourner and mourned. As the product of women's writing, the transgressive force of women's desires, and the concert of women's voices in the work of mourning, Judith Shakespeare's Eurydicean return reverses the scene of traditional pastoral *otium* in favor of rupture and resignification—a revolt in the garden. In reimagining female authority as heterogeneous subjectivities constituted by the free play of desire, *A Room of One's Own* renegotiates the patriarchal symbolic order traditionally endorsed by pastoral poetics in its green enclosures. Further, in in its homosocial circulation of women's affective desires, women's patronage, and women's literary ambitions, and in the poetic annunciation of the female pastoral speaker for whom the lost objects of female authority are incorporate, *Room* suggests that the female poet-mourner may not be punished for looking back because she refuses to look away.

CHAPTER 2

"ET IN ARCADIA EGO": PASTORAL AMBIVALENCE IN *THE WAVES*

Sunday 26 January

> I am 48: we have been at Rodmell—a wet, windy day again; but on my birthday we walked among the down, like the folded wings of grey birds; & saw first one fox, very long with his brush stretched; then a second; which had been barking, for the sun was hot over us; it leapt lightly over a fence & entered the furze—a very rare sight…I forgot to say when we made up our 6 month accounts, we found I had made about 3,020 last year—the salary of a civil servant…but I shall drop very heavily I think. The Waves won't sell more than 2,000 copies. I am stuck fast in that book—I mean, glued to it, like a fly on gummed paper. Sometimes I am out of touch; but go on; then I again feel that I have, at last by violent measure—like breaking through gorse—set my hands on something central. Perhaps I can now say something quite straight out; & at length; and need not always casting a line to make my book the right shape. But how to pull it all together, how to compost it—press it into one—I do not know; not can I guess the end—it might be a giant conversation. The interludes are very difficult, yet I think essential; so as to bridge & also give a background—the sea; insensitive nature—I don't know. But I think, when I feel this sudden directness, that it must be right: anyhow no other form of fiction suggest itself except as repetition at the moment.

—Virginia Woolf, *Diary* (1930)

In the last chapter, we witnessed, in *A Room of One's Own,* a double or split vision of Woolf's pastoral sensibilities: a branching poetics that takes the orderly quadrangles of Oxbridge and the tradition of literary inheritance encoded in the conventions of elegy as emblematic of an exclusively male provenance and that addresses to it a history of women's writing and experiences through a practice of

feminist citation and quotation. While such a practice involves a necessary distancing from and ironizing of traditional pastoral conventions it also, in authorizing and legitimizing female sexual identities and artistic subjectivities by appropriating the pastoral apparatus, largely endorses the power and vision of pastoral forms. This positive appropriation evidences in the playfully ironic landscapes of literary inspiration in *Orlando* that dance just outside the margins of *A Room of One's Own* and in the imaginings that encompasses the figuration of Woolf's androgynous mind and Judith Shakespeare. Likewise, the garden at Fernham offers a revisioned promise of pastoral transformation. It is a spectral promise, but in the shade of scholar Jane Ellen Harrison and the exuberance of its imaginary women as they race across the grass the ideality and possibility of Woolf's pastoral vision inheres. Within the simultaneous elegiac and anticipatory frameworks offered by their figurations, the very imagining of pastoral *as possible* provides both a corrective to history and a progressive temporal articulation of pastoral form. Insofar as *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* are critiques of a literary history that is enabled by and perpetuated by pastoral conventions, they offer Woolf a way to redress a sexist and imbalanced world of literary representation and production. In the appropriation of pastoral's ideological force in *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf works not so much to recover an idealized past but to reform the future.

The pastoral apparatus that Woolf mobilizes in service of female subjectivity and artistic identity is, in *A Room of One's Own* and in *Orlando,* deeply and inextricably tied to literature qua "the literary." Both novel and essay make their

political interventions largely in aesthetic terms, drawing on the pastoral for a lexicon of figures and tropes that may be turned toward female authority. In pursuit of this authority and in the fantastical lifespan that grounds her writing of "The Oak Tree," Orlando literally has world enough *and* time to assume the fullness of an authoritative and gender-fluid artistic identity. Similarly, in *A Room of One's Own,* pastoral may represent both Oxbridge and the institution of literary history as overwhelmingly patriarchal territories, but this pastoral topos still might be imaginatively occupied by a woman with five hundred pounds and a room with a lock on the door, and turned generatively toward a feminist vision. In attending to pastoral as a site of literary genesis, both novel and essay make material arguments that emphasize women's labor and attend to the historical and cultural conditions tied to literary production and reception. This attention to the conditions of artistic production and to the agents of its labor mark out their pastoral locales as sites of possible re-signification and rupture, promising an extension of Woolf's pastoral revolt into a broader social world.

But as the trajectory of Woolf's engagement with pastoral form bears out, the "broader social world" is more complicated than a spot by a fictionalized stream on a barely fictionalized university campus or a semi-serious romp through 300 years of literary history. The continued convergence of conventional pastoral norms and Woolf's increasingly radical politics animates her subsequent writing of *The Waves*, placing pressure on the socio-cultural utility of the pastoral idyll and problematizing the value conferred or imparted by pastoral convention. Woolf's experimental and "high modernist" novel may be described as a pastoral for its occurrence in the lyric

present, its abundance of natural reference, its elegiac tenor, the way in which aural expression captured as text gives it musical ambitions approximating classical pastoral form, or for the deep allusive networks that position the text within paradigms of poetic inheritance. If there is an argument to be made against attempting a study of pastoral in *The Waves,* it can be made by noting the way Woolf's natural imaginary so thoroughly saturates it. From the predawn meditation that opens the novel to the final breaking of waves on the shore at the end and the innumerable vegetal and animal figurations imbedded in its speaker's soliloquies, the lyrical form of Woolf's play-poem evokes pastoral conventions to excess, a quality that invites the critical task of determining what might be something like "nature" and what might be rightly considered "pastoral." Does every dropped petal, every wave, or every singing bird bear the signature of pastoral? If indeed everywhere one sees the sign of nature, we also see pastoral, what possibilities are there for pastoral signification? What do we gain from reading *The Waves* as part of a specific pastoral project? Moreover, how does Woolf's pastoral project in the *The Waves* manifest a politics grounded in a more radical feminist aesthetic?

In the epigraph to this chapter, Woolf's design for the novel-in-progress calls for the soliloquies of its speakers to be bridged by the sound of the sea and a background created from "insensitive nature" (D3:285). Writing in 1968, Frank McConnell, in an attempt to refute the popularity of the "mystical and eyeless" (D3:203) epithet that had likewise been derived from Woolf's diaries and become ubiquitously attached to it, and to reclaim its critical reputation from

"hypersensitive feminist apartheid" and "the neurasthenia of the suffragette" (25), emphatically insists that these sections are neither the "anthropomorphic and sympathetic nature of the pastoral nor its equally anthropomorphic contrary…" (36) Bracketing his need to safeguard modernist author "Virginia Woolf" from the clutches of hysterical maenads for the good of all sensible studies of literature, I take McConnell's desire to establish Woolf's text in a fictive rather than mystical register, as a "book[s] that relive[s] other books" (Woolf, D3:203), along with his insistence on thinking of the novel's lyrical interludes as constructing "a phenomenal world without the intervention of human consciousness" in good faith, as describing a confrontation between poetic experience and "the real world."[46] And yet, the interludes he references are certainly full of anthropomorphic qualities at odds with the "self-sufficient un-humanity" (36) McConnell wishes to see. The novel's opening depicts the sunrise as a woman crouched beneath the horizon with outstretched arm and a upraised lamp, and characterizes the waves that draw back from the shore as "s*ighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes*."[47] (3) In both cases, the text invites sympathetic identification with natural phenomena of the predawn landscape: either by encouraging an expansive projection of female form by which to figure elemental agency or by initiating a sympathetic breath in its reader—a trial intake and release of the water's motion into the lungs that encourages embodied identification with the fictive landscape.

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[46] See Alex Zwerdling. Also, *Woolf in the Real World: Selected Papers from the Thirteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf,* 2003

[47] Jane Marcus associates this figure with the "Britannia" of imperial rule; likewise Britannia's outstretched arm and trident or similar WWI propaganda postcards that feature Britannia with a torch surrounded by battleships.

These early anthropomorphic moments challenge the aesthetically bound *and* apolitical inhuman nature that McConnell claims for them. If anything, the natural imaginary established in the novel's opening moments and the passages that follow fully encourages a pastoral experience of highly aestheticized natural delight adapted to human experience. As the light expands, nature's purview does likewise, showing traces of human activity: trees in a garden, the walls of a house, a bedroom window and a blind. Far from the uninhabitable sublime, the sun rises to reveal a pleasant and habitual domesticity surrounded by a still anthropomorphized companion Nature that makes its touch known in "*a blue fingerprint of shadow under the leaf by the window*." (3) The first sign of human life within the house appears as a blind that stirs "*slightly*" but remains unseen. The closing moments of the interlude, in which the birds sing their "*blank melody*," induces the desire for the imprint of human consciousness to interpret and give meaning to the song as artistic activity, an invitation to allegoresis. This landscape, ideal and almost timeless, bearing only quiet suggestions of human industry and life, feels much like the *locus amoenus* of classical pastoral. Time, the idyll's mortal enemy, appears in a narrative of unfolding light and revelation that organizes human presence within a wider natural context, suggesting fully the kind of myth-making that is part of pastoral's assignation. The minimized presence of human intervention in the landscape, along with an aesthetic richness that could place it among any number of Renaissance pastorals, further encourages thinking of the inter-chapters as depicting a bountiful Island Arcadia.

Given the conservative considerations with which pastoral has historically

been associated, situating the novel within a tradition of Arcadian poetry reopens Woolf's writing to the charges of elitism and classism historically associated with Bloomsbury. Reading the interludes precisely as pastoral, however, likewise creates the opportunity to find the counterforce by which complex pastoral achieves its significance, and in so doing also to locate a reading of Woolf's pastoral as a critique of empire, patriarchy, and the specified white cultural elite whom it makes the object of its inquiry. In the pages that follow, I give an extended close reading of the novel's interludes, not as a backdrop of insensitive nature, but as gorgeously rendered anti-pastoral allegory that frames the progressive subjectification of the novel's six speakers as the ambivalently privileged citizens of England's Arcadian empire. In so doing, I situate my reading of pastoral in *The Waves* in relation to other scholars, like Jane Marcus, who reads the novel as a critical and parodic encounter with empire and the elegiac frameworks that support it, and Jed Etsy who identifies the intimate, even essential relationship between pastoral nostalgia and imperialist rhetoric in modernist fiction, and against those who would read the interludes naively either as "nature," or as providing the consolations of a natural imaginary. I'll then turn to the effects of this framing by examining how these same pastoral poetics play out in the constitution of the novel's six speakers, paying particular attention to the manner in which Woolf's pastoral poetics organize questions of cultural power and legibility in relation to both patriarchy and empire. As we will see, Woolf's backdrop of "insensitive nature" not only makes visible a disciplinary cultural inheritance but offers itself as a site of radical feminist poetics.

I. Nature, Politics, Pastoral Aesthetics:

The rising sun of the interchapters progressively reveals and produces a sumptuous sensory experience wherever it turns its gaze:

> *The sun laid broader blades upon the house. The light touched something green in the corner window and made it a lump of emerald, a cave of pure green like stoneless fruit. It sharpened the edges of chairs and tables and stitched white table-cloths with fine gold wires. As the light increased a bud here and there spilt asunder and shook out flowers, green veined and quivering, as if the effort to open had set them rocking, and pealing a faint carillon as they beat their frail clappers against their white walls. Everything became softly amorphous, as if the china of the plate flowed and the steel of the knife were liquid. Meanwhile the concussion of the waves breaking, fell with muffled thuds, like logs falling, on the shore.* (19)

Jane Goldman reads the color green in *The Waves* as proposing tantalizing if not realized feminist possibilities.[48] Citing Rhoda's late-novel vision of the sun setting behind trees: " a slice of green lies behind them elongated like the blade of a knife in her dreams, or some tapering island on which nobody sets foot" (158), she suggests an unrealized language of color and light in relation to suffragist traditions and illustration that might manifest as a "feminist prismatic" and the imagining of a future

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[48] *The Feminist Aesthetics* of Virginia Woolf, 204-205

“liberated from all such historical and political concerns” (208) While the “green oases” of Goldman’s analysis might indeed offer one such possibility in the dream of a transcendent sexual freedom (which in turn draws from the super trope of nature’s own plenty and the pastoral promise of aesthetic rejuvenation), “green” as it frequently appears in *The Waves,* also furnishes that dream with an ideological counter weight. In this sense in we might read ‘green’ as metaleptically mediating between transcendent and material circumstances. In the passage above, the expanding solar light makes contact with some undefined material in the window and transforms it into something that is once inorganic and organic, mineral and vegetal, both possession and location. The viridescence of the transfigured ‘something’ expands rapturously and suggestively as the flowers burst and bloom with a sonorous ecstasy that is at once flower and stamen, clapper and bell, a quivering clitoris, sexual awakening and its containment. The fertile multiplicity of this “green” metonymically links thing to emerald to cave to fruit and drives the burgeoning movement and sensuality of the passage. At the same time the passage exhibits its ekphrastic virtuosity, it catalogs a rich list of resources to be derived from the same source that supplies its lyrical abundance. An emerald may be a rapturous fertile grotto of green light or an unobstructed hollow, but it also may be a point of entry and exit for resource extraction. Read as such, the opulence and whimsy of precious stone and golden thread presumably made by light turns towards an economic interest that evokes the mercantilism of a maritime nation and imperial center. The green ‘veins’ of budding flowers become the conduit for gems and gold mines; the steel and porcelain of knife and plate become liquid, not just as a post-

coital feeling of oceanic bliss, but as a simultaneous stream of raw materials and goods from the colonial margins to the civilized center. In the un-solid state by which "things" lose their status as products and return to their elemental properties, we are reminded of the ways in which pastoral poieisis evokes both making and unmaking. Meanwhile, the waves on the shore, once the realm of sleepers sighing, has become the concussive force of logs, alienated and felled trees, in a figuration, that is, if anything, decidedly anti-pastoral.

The anti-pastoral scope of the interludes continue to widen as the sun rises; cozy scenes of garden and house give way to include, by the end of the fifth, as Molly Hite points out, "a large section of the globe." (xlii) As their range expands, so too do the opportunities for reading them as an anti-pastoral allegory that takes as its object the rich mythology of England as Island Arcadia. The third interlude fully explores the range of anti-pastoral sentiment available through the introduction of martial metaphor into the anthropomorphized landscape and the extended narrative of birds in the garden who come to stand for an acutely figured insular human community marked by social subjectivity and organization, the drive for companionship and solitude, competition, acquisitiveness, and the apprehension of beauty. As the interlude shifts from its opening passage focused on the sun and sea to the garden, the previously "*blank melody*" (3) of the first interlude has become an existential melange:

> *In the garden the birds that had sung erratically and spasmodically in the dawn on that tree, on that bush, now sang together in chorus, shrill and sharp; now together, as if conscious of companionship, now alone as if to the pale*

> *blue sky. They swerved, all in one flight, when the black cat moved among the bushes, when the cook threw cinders on the ash heap and startled them. Fear was in their song, and apprehension of pain, and joy to be snatched quickly now at this instant. Also they sang emulously in the clear morning air, swerving high over the elm tree, singing together as they chased each other, escaping, pursuing, pecking each other as they turned high in the air. And then tiring of pursuit and flight, lovelily they came descending delicately declining, dropped down and sat silent on the tree, on the wall, with their bright eyes glancing, and their heads turned this way, that way; aware, awake; intensely conscious of one thing, one object in particular.* (52)

As a coterie, the birds respond to perceived danger together; their song, once 'blank' and 'erratic' has become organized by affective extremes of fear, pain, and intermittent joy— an urgency that belies the promise of pastoral's arcadian registers. The imitative, "emulous" character of their singing participates in a practice of mimicry that knits up social community and identity, as well as implicates them in an unconscious mimetic representation of a larger natural order. The community constituted by stimulus and response to a broader world is also fraught with internal competition and caprice. Even as the passage patiently exfoliates its pastoral motifs, the aesthetic richness of its poetic diction and metaphor displays an intensified commitment to language and beauty that is enshrined at the heart of pastoral making. The alliterative rhythmic pleasure of "delicately, declining dropped down and sat silent" prepares and focuses the reader's attention for and on the gorgeously turned figurations that follow; the

sheer patterned delight and excess of its poetic expression demands participation in the pastoral pleasance that celebrates and valorizes institutions of Church and private property with all the analogical richness of the metaphysical conceit:

> *Perhaps it was a snail shell, rising in the grass like a grey cathedral, a swelling building burnt with dark rings and shadowed green by the grass. Or perhaps they saw the splendour of the flowers making a light of flowing purple over the beds, through which dark tunnels of purple shade were driven between the stalks. Or they fixed their gaze on the small bright apple leaves, dancing yet withheld, stiffly sparkling among the pink-tipped blossoms. Or they saw the rain drop on the hedge, pendant but not falling, with a whole house bent in it, and towering elms; or, gazing straight at the sun, their eyes became gold beads.* (52)

Shifting the large scale narrative of birds in the wider landscape to the minute survey of its pastoral properties, the keen artistic vision of the birds reproduces a church "*rising in the grass*" and "*shadowed green*" by that same terrain and a house hanging "*pendant*" in a raindrop. This vision implicates human art and industry in a landscape that both diminuates and expands their significance. The larger ecclesiastical structure of the swelling cathedral exceeds its humble origins as protective abode of a small and vulnerable life form. Likewise, the tiny raindrop reveals with distorting allure a human dwelling settled within a world of majestic elms. The mature elms themselves may either be counted among the riches of a country house well-situated within a rural landscape or as the source of green and cooling shade that is often the site of pastoral

poetry. Together the house itself and the enormity of its trees is given a paradoxically expansive presence in the "wholeness" which is nevertheless contained within a single drop of water. Such containment suggests a possessable microcosm like a water globe or Victorian curio. Further, the pendant-like suspension that gives the metaphor its frangible sensibility doubles as a coveted and similarly possessable necklace or jewel. These shifts of scale and perspective work within and against the harmonizing energies of the pastoral to include both worldly fascination and alienation within its boundaries. These resonances are reinforced by the transformation of the bird's eyes, the vehicle and mode of this intricate pastoral vision, into "gold beads." Staring into the sun with this altered and gilded vision, their exploration of the landscape, which at first appeared motivated by keen curiosity and the apprehension of beauty, subsequently degenerates into viciousness, violence, senseless consumption and rot. By staring too long into the sun, the gold-bead of the bird's eye becomes cynosure to the throughly dystopian 'natural' reality that follows:

> *Now glancing this side, that side, they looked deeper, beneath the flowers, down the dark avenues into the unlit world where the leaf rots and the flower has fallen. Then one of them, beautifully darting, accurately alighting, spiked the soft, monstrous body of the defenseless worm, pecked again and yet again, and left it to fester. Down there among the roots where the flowers decayed, gusts of dead smells were wafted; drops formed on the bloated sides of swollen things. The skin of rotten fruit broke and matter oozed too thick to run. Yellow excretions were exuded by slugs and now and again an amorphous*

body with a head at either end swayed slowly from side to side. The gold-eyed birds darting in between the leaves observed that purulence, that wetness, quizzically. Now and then they plunged the tips of their beaks savagely into the sticky mixture. (52-53)

The birds' journey into an underworld of '*dark avenues*' dramatizes a fallen and anti-edenic state that turns the invitation to allegoresis first identified in their dawn singing into a fully fledged social allegory contextualized by a violent world of natural selection. The lilting symmetry of language initially adjunct to the "*beautifully darting*" "*naturally alighting*" birds and which first served as an enticement to poetic conceit lies juxtaposed to acts of aggressive individualism and interspecies violence. The paragraph ekphrastically embellishes a cosmos apportioned with decay and '*monstrous'* bodies, stasis and rot; the "*drops [that] form…on the bloated sides of swollen things*" condense and corrupt the previous pastoral figurations of church and house pointing to large scale systemic degeneracy "*at the roots where the flowers decayed*." Wasteful and wanton, the birds here seemingly kill for pleasure as well as sustenance; they inhabit their world of '*dead smells*' and teeming pustules with curiosity and a lack of apparent intentionality that links their brutality and innocence together disconcertingly. At the same time, the passage attends to these violences with the same loving aurality that characterizes the bird's above-world activity. The consonance, assonance and slant rhyme of "*spiked the soft*" and "*tips of their beaks savagely into the sticky mixture*" conspire musically to produce poetic pleasure along with visceral aversion to the teeming world they paradoxically commend. By the

passage's close, it is evident that the metamorphosis in which the sun transfigures birds' eyes into gold beads has also enacted a form of possession, displacing human agency onto the birds in a plausible fable of first-world capitalism. By extension, the sun that shines its progressively expanding light on the world is brought into a symbolic order that implicates its solar provenance in human greed and conflict.

Finally, bookended in metaphors of martial violence, the third interlude engages a larger narrative of imperial myth-making. The sea-holly whose "*mailed leaves gleam blue as steel*" (52) in the opening of the interlude foreshadows an ending full of gathering force and war-like similes: "*The wind rose. The waves drummed on the shore like turbaned warriors, like turbaned men with poisoned assegais who, whirling their arms on high, advance upon the feeding flocks, the white sheep*" (53). The pastoral quietus of feeding sheep mirrors the image of birds as they feed on their corrupted nectar, inviting comparison between the vicious gold-eyed bird of the underworld and the innocent sheep upon whom the dark enemy advances. In the cadences of its last lines, we hear also the tattoo of soldiers arriving and the steadiness of a war drum beating like hooves thundering upon the shore. The wild pageantry of their approach, announced in a rhyming couplet ("*the poisoned assegais /who whirling their arms on high),* likewise ushers in figures of a violent colonial imagination as part of the interludes' subsequent pastoral catalogue. The arrival of the exotic Other in the guise of "*turbaned warriors…turbaned men*" is deployed as a menace to the insularity of the already established pastoral world. In the ensuing interludes, daggers, spears, lances, and soldiers on horseback appear alongside more exotic extrapolations of

'otherness' like "long-breasted, white haired women" who wash their clothes in the river, mosques, steamers carrying passenger across the seas, and desolate cairns. The fifth interlude, in which the sun finally appears at its zenith and covering a world with its light, definitively also names, for the first time, the "English fields" (107) that surround the house and garden of its unfolded pastoral world. If these interludes do indeed figure an island pastoral, it is one that becomes obviously and progressively invaded by distorted figures of a colonial imagination that contests its Arcadian sureties and reveals its boundaries as constituted by the 'dark' threat to its largely paradisal domesticity. Simultaneously, it disputes the purported innocence of its white sheep who, like the gold-eyed birds, it sustains and nurtures on a heady mixture of foreign trade and imperial commerce.[49]

II. Culture, Politics, Antipastoral Aesthetics:

Neither are the novel's pastoral investments confined to the lyric sections that demarcate the speakers' soliloquies. The first section of the novel takes places in a garden enclosure, and at least several others in parks, along the river, in the country, or in the liminal spaces between London and the wider world. Within these locales, the recursive structure of the novel also encourages Woolf's interleaving of pastoral sensibilities with continued references to colonial fantasies, gender, class and racial

[49] The passage between the birds and the encroaching warriors returns to the house and outlines of domesticity. Actually features a looking-glass —a important critical figure for Woolf intertwined with sexist and imperial vision endemic to patriarchy and capitalism. I've omitted a reading of it here to maintain the momentum of current reading, but it is surely relevant in that the house and its looking-glass which "***whitens** [the suns] pool upon the wall*" mediates between the images of the feeding birds and the feeding sheep and [flower and phantom flower]: "*The real flower on the window-sill was attended by a phantom flower. Yet the phantom flower was part of the flower for when a bud broke free, the paler flower in the glass opened a bud too.*" Return to this in next chapter, maybe, for the ways in which *Three Guineas* and *The Years* featuring mirroring moments.

violences. For example, the novel catalogues the prosperity of a man who once "shot his governess through the heart" with an arrow and a rich Englishwoman with "pearl pagodas hanging from her ears" with the adopted "coffee-coloured youth whom she calls the Messiah" (127) alongside thoughts like "I am a mountain goat leaping from crag to crag" (126) or "I am green as the yew tree in the shade of the hedge. My hair is made of leaves." (6) Sentiments that situate the workings and beneficiaries of western imperialism alongside figures of a more 'organic' nature deepen Jane Marcus's paradigm shifting observation that *The Waves* should be read as a "narrative about culture making." They also lend interpretative density to moments of generative ontological confusion within the novel such as Jinny's pronouncement "From us every sort of building, policy, venture, picture, poem, child, factory, will spring. Life comes; Life goes; We make life. So they say."(128)

Carrie Rohman characterizes this utterance as one of the "deep ideological premises" of Woolf's text, asking us to consider the "becoming artistic of life itself in its inhuman manifestations." (95) Insofar as the lines point to a leveling out of the various kinds of production, both natural and cultural, they also problematize human agency as a participant in various forms of that production. The forms of 'life' that come and go appear to spontaneously generate from the collective body of society (the "us" or "we") such that materials themselves are energized rather than the human makers themselves. The quality and freedom of movement imputed to "Life" as an abstraction diminishes human agency, emphasizing an involuntary dimension to cultural (re)production and ironizing what counts as life. What then is more alive: the

poem or venture that "springs" or the speaker of this rote cultural catalogue? These juxtapositions invite an understanding of pastoral in *The Waves* as exceeding the parameters established by *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* of the pastoral idyll as a site of contested, but positive cultural value, intimating that the placement of nature's green in and among the inequities and institutions of culture are not simple juxtapositions, but remain contiguous and complicitous with them in some way. Indeed in the closing section of *The Waves*, where Bernard attempts to sum up the course of life (his life the life of others) the objectively pastoral sheep that "advance remorselessly in that wooden way of theirs, step by step on stiff pointed legs" (199) are an obvious metaphor for cultural conformity and exhaustion rather than natural creativity. The "green woods and green fields and sheep advancing with measured tread, munching" are forces to be fought with "infinite ingenuity" (200).[50]

Derek Ryan, citing the work of Karen Barad and Donna Harraway, has suggested the term "naturecultures" as a way to think about the entangled phenomena of the novel's purview. In their call for a more thoroughly post-human notion of reality that "refuses the idea of a natural (or for that matter purely cultural) division between nature and culture" (155), naturecultures treat humans as one among many emergent forms of interest rather than the privileged subjects of humanist discourse.[51] Studies of naturecultures identify how the boundary between nature and culture is organized with

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[50] Rhoman's reading and book pushes the "inhuman" productivity in Woolf's text into a positive valance while for me, in this reading, it remains part of Woolf's critique of involuntary and uninterrogated modes of cultural production.

[51] See also Deleuze and Guattari; Bonnie Scott-Kime likewise suggests "naturecultures" for use in *Hollow of the Wave.*

the intention of drawing human subjects into wider relational contexts. This boundary, however, the place where art/nature or nature/culture meet, and moreover, how one travels between them, has traditionally been the subject of pastoral's inquiry. Ryan's framing of Woolfian nature as phenomena that mounts a challenge to the humanist privilege of individualism and embodiment downplays the ways in which the nature cited in *The Waves* is already and often threaded through a literary instantiation coded by Romantic and Classical poetic conventions. This is emphatically *not* to say that *The Waves* does not have something new and radical to offer about epistemological uncertainty or ontological indeterminacy that moves our thinking of being and embodiment forward—lines of inquiry like Ryan's or that of Delueze and Guattari which take Woolfian aesthetics as generating "new" modes of being are welcome, invigorating, exciting (and plausibly in line with Woolf's own aspirations for polymorphous embodiment) —but to suggest that thinking of posthuman assemblages in *The Waves* in which nature is represented unproblematically as "nature" elides the fact that Woolf's natural imaginary is already culturally inscribed. Adoption of "naturecultures" as a way to name and think about the ontological boundaries in *The Waves* fits into the reformist and moral imperatives of "post-pastoral" literature as outlined by Terry Gifford, among them: "awe leading to humility in the face of the creative-destructive forces of nature; awareness of the culturally loaded language we use about the country; accepting responsibility for our relationship with nature and its dilemmas; recognition that the exploitation of nature is often accompanied by the exploitation of the less powerful people who work with it, visit it or less obviously

depend upon its resources." (6) It's not clear to me, however, that a sustained reading of pastoral elements in *The Waves* moves us fully into the realm of the post-pastoral. Rather, the novel positions Woolf's text on the threshold of the post-pastoral. It does so by orienting attention to England as an island nation and imperial center codified and defined in the popular imagination by its pastoral poetry and the pastoralization of history. The novel also documents the possibilities for subjectivization provided by pastoral paradigms among an interwar ruling class facing its colonial legacy. In this sense, if fleetingly for now, I'd like to suggest that "culture-natures" might be an effective way to think about these intersections in *The Waves,* not least of all because focusing on the cultural dimensions of Woolf's natural imaginary highlights pastoral's idealizing distortions, ironizes the myth making of its characters and returns us to questions of human agency so crucial to Woolf's text and a reading of her novel as a feminist critique of empire.

It is this critique that Jane Marcus has in mind when she excerpts JM Coetzee's "submerged mind of empire" to frame *The Waves* as a parodic and post-modern novel about British white colonialism:

> What has made it impossible for us to live in time like fish in water, like birds in air, like children? It is the fault of Empire! Empire has created the time of history. Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and to plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of

> Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies…By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation. (JM Coetzee, *Waiting for Barbarians,* 145)

Focusing on epic and elegy as the productive poles of empire, Marcus concentrates on the ideological force of the novel's entanglements with Romantic poetry as driving Woolf's critique of individual, group, and national identity, but largely sidesteps the troubled centrality of a pastoral ideal to both Coetzee's political allegory and to Woolf's fiction. Following Coetzee, Marcus explores "the way in which the cultural narrative 'England'…is created by an Eton/Cambridge elite who (re)produce the national epic (rise of…) and elegy (fall of…) in praise of the hero," (145) reading *The Waves* as problematizing both whiteness and "the politics of elegy as a form of social control" (143). Insofar as Woolf self-consciously experimented with elegy as the name and form for her fictions, *The Waves*, as Marcus describes it, traces the limits of that undertaking by implicating a white cultural elite and the consolations of that same culture in projects of nationalism and war.

In Coetzee's novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians,* a low level colonial official, living on the frontier of an unnamed and unidentified South Africa, explores his own complicity with the processes and preservation of Empire. The poignancy of the Magistrate's narration lies largely in his dual status as both a functionary and victim of the 'civilization' that emanates from the Empire's metropolitan center, a vacillation that violently forces him to confront and condemn the workings of empire as an

internal, as well as external, condition. In the course of this psychological exfoliation, he repeatedly turns to condition of temporal symbiosis implied by the pastoral ideal, the living "in time like fish in water, like birds in air, like children…" (133)— a prelapsarian state that is, however, disrupted and broken by the machinery of Empire. As the already constituted subject of Empire, however, it is unclear how much of the Magistrate's nostalgic desire for a harmonious cycle of seasons unbroken by 'history' is achievable and how much of it is the consolation offered in exchange for the harsh realities of existence on the margins of empire. The "mad and virulent vision" of the Magistrate by which Marcus chooses to read *The Waves* occurs at a moment in which the narrator finds himself, fallen from the Empire's graces, outside of the village walls, calf-deep in marsh waters full of fish and frogs ensnared by the daydream of an arcadian existence that is inextricably linked to "becoming an unthinking savage," and his own troubled relationship to the "saviour with a sword" (the hero of empire) that is paradoxically the guarantor and destroyer of his "life giving illusions" (143). As the Magistrate laments the violent confrontation between empire and its 'barbarians,' characterizing its human casualties as the "irruption of history into the static time of the oasis." (142), the inevitable companion to his grief, is the lost dream of living "outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects." (154) In attempting to offer an account or logos of the outpost and the lives in it, his first recourse is to that same pastoral ideal; "We lived in the time of the seasons, of the harvests, of the migrations of the water birds. We lived with nothing between us and the stars." (154) And yet, even as he writes them, he acknowledges this experience of time inscribed within a

pastoral ideal as "devious…equivocal…reprehensible…" promising to "abandon the locutions of a civil servant with literary ambitions and begin to to tell the truth."(155) The Magistrate's self-reproach reveals a tenacious pastoral lie and its complicity with the time of empire—his conceptualization of 'the oasis' and the spinning time of seasons may be internal to the workings of empire, itself.

Marcus focuses her reading on the soliloquies of its speakers, but to attend to the poetics of *The Waves'*s nine interludes as constituted by anti-imperial pastoral allegory challenges the nature of consolation offered in readings of the novel's elegiac character such as that of James Naremore who writes "In the face of the inevitable tragedy of time and death she [Woolf] offered the consolation of nature seen from a cosmic perspective, as in the inter-chapters of *The Waves*" (244). While Marcus may overemphasize the mocking tone assumed by Woolf's prose in attempting to secure its status as political critique rather than as a high modernist exploration of subjectivity, reading the novel as a parodic encounter with pastoral and elegiac frameworks exposes and works against the consolations of imperial culture.

Jed Etsy highlights the compatibility of English imperialism and English pastoralism, identifying in particular "pastoral nostalgia as a crucial element within imperialist rhetoric." (26) In his discussion of late nineteenth-century urbanization, Raymond Williams marks a complex change in idealized attitudes toward the English countryside brought about by industrialization. Emigration to the periphery of empire was seen as a solution for both the displaced rural poor and the overcrowding of the cities. Additionally, an expanding middle class found career opportunities abroad and

overseas in fields of colonial administration and projects of war in service of empire.[52] Imperial exile and the dream of return intensified a wide-spread cultural investment in the very idea of England's green, rural home (281-282). Likewise, in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell discusses at length the various "arcadian recourses" in English thought, the "highly sophisticated literary pastoralism" of English writing, and an entrenched British ruralism that serves as an index by which one may both think the atrocity war and to solace oneself against it. Considering the widespread pastoral imaginary suffusing the war writings of poets and soldiers in WWI, Fussell accentuates the usefulness of pastoral allusion as "assisting ironic perception," that is, in marking the distance between the desirable and the actual all the while still creating, however, momentarily the poetic pleasure of a pastoral dwelling or "oasis for occupancy." (300) Superseding the solacing deferrals offered by the green worlds of poetry and personal correspondence and entering the worlds of wartime propaganda, for a moment, we can read the ironic possibilities offered by Fussell in their fullness by noting that the First Washington Conference in 1941, known as the Arcadia Conference, was the first military strategy meeting between Britain and the US. Taking place just weeks after American entry into World War II, it established a wartime chain of command and cooperation between the two Allied nations, and also committed the combined Allied forces to "make no separate peace" with enemy forces

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[52] This economic expansion necessitates the quelling of "the barbarians" in Coetzee's novel, for example, and is also the subject the Cavafy's poem from which the novel takes its title.

until "total victory" had been achieved.[53] The adoption of such an arcadian vision to characterize a global program of war is perhaps the most damning evidence of a pastoral myth turned toward national agendas and justifying, paradoxically, activities of militarism and empire. As a consoling myth, the pacific possibilities of pastoral's *locus amoenus* suggested by England's green and pleasant lands remain at least nominally always an aspirational one. Thus situated, it seems impossible to overstate the importance of the pastoral ideal in interwar England both to national self-image and to the subjects constituted by its cultural imaginary. To think of the lyrical interludes in *The Waves* as engaging a project of national self-imagining and a discourse of western imperialism through their pastoral poetics is also to ask how those same pastoral poetics might be at work in the constitution of its subjects.

III. Pastoral Poet / Pastoral Subject

In her readings of the novel's pastoral qualities Jane Goldman suggests that pastoral might provide a descriptive analog for the nascent solipsistic worlds of its speakers.[54] She gestures to *The Waves*'s oscillating intersections of subjective and phenomenal concerns as a contested pastoral terrain over which various voices in the novel compete. For Goldman, pastoral in *The Waves* offers a poetics through which to explore varying facets of subjectivity—the self in relation to others, the absence of the self, the self in crisis, and the negotiation of the phenomenological world in lyric

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[53] The treaty established at the Arcadia Conference was the basis for the resulting United Nations.

[54] *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf; Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf,* 69-71

terms. (69-71)[55] This reading of the novel's pastoral qualities is consistent with an early reception history of the *The Waves* as a high modernist text that privileges "subjectivity" as its object. Noting the pastoral lyricism of *The Waves* as participant in the negotiation of subjectivity provokes attention to pastoral as one such apparatus for producing subjects but does little necessarily to advance an argument that takes pastoral itself as a site of a progressive feminist poetics. Goldman points to the reiterative metaphors of *The Waves's* six speakers for a mythopoetical account that is both feminist and —in keeping with the emerging connections in Woolf's thinking between patriarchy and empire—anti-colonial. These metaphors appear largely through and as cultural and literary allusion—the same allusions that Marcus characterizes as parodying Romantic convention specifically, but which I am suggesting belong to the deeper ideological force of pastoral conventions. These allusions, according to Goldman, evoke a deeply literary cultural inheritance, and perform two functions. Such allusions both enable male literary ambitions and hinder those of the novel's female characters. Her observation recapitulates and extends an argument first made by Beverly Ann Schlack in noting that Woolf's allusive practice in *The Waves* provides the opportunity for the male speakers to perform their own literary ambitions, whereas the perceived lack of this practice in its female speakers indicates either the dearth or impossibility of such ambitions. To Schlack, Susan "lives in a nearly archaic, fundamental world of feminine instinct" and for Jinny the

[55] This reading of the novel's pastoral qualities is consistent with an early reception history of the The Waves / high modernist understanding of the text as privileging subjectivity.

"reflective life of the mind' is "impossible" (104). Both women live lives "of the body…bereft of literary allusion." Their sensibilities are "realistic and antipoetic." Of the three, Schlack avers, Rhoda alone appears capable of poetic thinking or intellectual abstraction as evidenced by her encounter with Shelley's poetry in the library and her thorough adoption of his diction, though she is not "conscious enough" to own books, herself (104). Rhoda's fearful, amorphous sensibility is the anti-body to Jinny and Susan's life of the body and what Schlack calls "the essence of alienation" (105). In Schlack's reading, Rhoda's adoption of Shelleyean sensibilities becomes not a performance of literary ambition nor of knowledge, as that of her male counterparts, but the expression of "genuine character," thus imputing to Woolf a denial of a self-aware subjectivity for her female speakers. Bonnie Scott-Kime characterizes Rhoda as "unsuccessful" and "inarticulate."[56] But to think of these moments as bound by and expressing purely literary concerns, as Schlack seems to do, provides an incomplete account of pastoral's ideological capacity and of its participation in Woolf's critique of culture making. If in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf's practice of feminist citation ironizes a relationship to patriarchal literary inheritance, in *The Waves*, it participates in making visible a disciplinary cultural inheritance —laying bare a process of subjectivization via the pastoral. All six speakers in the novel experience some compression and contraction of an ideal or unbound self in relation to societal pressures. The expression of that selfhood is regulated through the speakers' access to

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[56] "The World Split Its Husk"

various cultural myths that range from Romantic and Classical poetry to orientalist fables of empire, but most frequently manifest through large scale and fragmentary pastoral forms. Pastoral as it participates in character making in *The Waves* is always complicated by Woolf so as to resist idyllic modulations. To engage Woolf's writing of *The Waves* through ongoing considerations of pastoral poetry, then, is also to engage the means by which lyric consciousness organizes questions of cultural power and legibility in relation to empire in its pages. The next portion of this chapter focuses on the culture-natures of *The Waves* as they stage a process of pastoral subjectivization for its six speakers with a specified emphasis on gender and the mapping of civil collectivity within Woolf's Island Arcadia.

For example, Louis expresses consistent feelings of class inadequacy and an internalized xenophobia as a result of his father's profession and his own colonial associations. His father is, as Louis endlessly iterates, "a banker in Brisbane." Although naturally brilliant, Louis wants neither to conjugate Latin nor to speak in class until Neville, one of Britain's fully vested native sons, has modeled how to do so. Louis's sense of cultural inferiority and peripheral patrimony partially curtails his own pursuit of writing, but does not prevent him from occupying a subject position authorized and sustained by a culturally normative maleness or from being one who benefits from and places his faith in a dominant patriarchal order. If anything, Louis's insecurity about his right to an English cultural inheritance causes him to double down on the importance of tradition in order to consolidate and legitimate his claim to cultural authority. Likewise, Bernard, the novel's eventual elegist and self-proclaimed

summer-up of disparate narratives, relies on his powers of observation and a voracious aesthetic appetite to fit his desires for self-expression. The copia of culture and a knowable place in it (an education, a career, a wife, a family) appears infinitely available to him, enabling a range of various fictional heroic identities by which to understand himself and unfettered access to a world of aesthetic consolation. In reflecting on his youth, he recalls, " I changed and changed; was Hamlet, was Shelley, was the hero whose name I now forget, of a novel by Dostoevsky, was for a whole term, incredibly, Napoleon; but was Byron chiefly" (184). When seeking consolation for Percival's death, Bernard seeks it in the Italian Room at the National Gallery, finding it among the various objects of culture and their feminine figurations: "Here are pictures. Here are cold madonnas among their pillars…Here are gardens; and Venus among her flowers; here are saints and blue madonnas…they expand my consciousness of him and bring him back differently…I too can be heroic" (112-113). Although Bernard, at times, doubts the potency of human expression in the face of mortal existence, he refutes death persistently in order to verify art's power and his role at the center as a maker of art and culture. Bernard participates in a long tradition of Hero-Poets who perpetuate the culture that nurtures and sustains them. Likewise, the intensely intellectual and fastidious aesthete, Neville, whose same-sex erotic attachment to Percival makes him a potential social outcast, is protected by his role as a university classics scholar. His place inside a hegemonic educational system reserved for upper-class males of English society, itself deeply implicated in systems of patriarchal pastoral provenance, authorizes his erotic attachments rather than

invalidates them.

The novel's early pages dramatize aspects of this socio-cultural order within a world of pastoral enclosure which is not an escape from but rather the site of their acculturation. The first extended pastoral soliloquy of the book is given to Louis, who is left standing on the other side of a hedge when the others have gone inside for breakfast. Alone, Louis moves from the highly aestheticized observation of his natural surroundings into a meditation anchored by the phallic image of upright stalks on the green. Louis imagines himself to be a stalk as he also presses one in his hand, a convergence that invites an erotic equivalency between both having an erogenous zone and being one. His consciousness and sense of embodiment expand downward through the earth until they make contact with a fantasy of exotic cultural origination that then moves between the activities of the other school children on the green and a sense of his own organic rootedness:

> It is very early, before lessons. Flower after flower is specked on the depths of the green. The petals are harlequins. Stalks rise from the black hollows beneath. The flowers swim like fish made of light upon the dark, green waters. I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre. All tremors shake me, and the weight of the earth is pressed to my ribs. Up here my eyes are green leaves, unseeing. I am a boy in grey flannels with a belt fastened by a brass snake up here. Down there my eyes are the lidless eyes of a stone figure in a desert by the Nile. I see women

> passing with red pitchers to the river; I see camels swaying and men in turbans. I hear strapping, tremblings, stirrings, around me. (6)

The hedge's protective borders enable an experience of selfhood that includes Louis's fragile prelapsarian awareness of his own sexual potency: "I am green as a yew tree in the shade of the hedge. My hair is made of leaves. I am rooted to the middle of the earth. My body is a stalk. I press the stalk. A drop oozes from the hole at the mouth and slowly thickly grows larger and larger." The image of an earth rich in mineral resources and of an ancient civilization anchors, naturalizes, and intensifies Louis's simultaneously expansive and self-centered awareness. The resources of time and nature conspire in a scene of onanistic pleasure that is only interrupted by Jinny, who invades the hedge, fragmenting Louis's quasi-mystical connection to time and place: "I am a boy in a grey flannel suit…She has kissed me. All is shattered" (7). Jinny's presence returns Louis to a bodily boundedness constituted by his gender and his school uniform, severing his fantasy of racial memory and community. Jinny's kiss further pulls him into a world constituted by social rather than self-relation, recapitulating the Edenic myth of male sufficiency ruined by female sexual intervention. This scene naturalizes, by way of its pastoral reference, the ego- and androcentric entitlement of a Louis who will come to say "The weight of the world is on our shoulders; its vision is through our eyes," who will position himself according to a desire to "inherit a chair and a rug; a place in Surrey with glass houses, and some rare conifer, melon, or flowering tree which other merchants will envy," and likewise wish "a little typist would come cuddle on my knees" (122-123). Louis places his

surety in the fact of a patriarchal cultural inheritance that likewise transmutes nature into commodity, competition, and social status, much the gold-eyed birds of the interludes. The teleological inevitability of the masculine subject whose exuding sap attracts mates to its stalk and eventually inherits the earth demonstrates alliances between the children's experience of the garden and the adults they will become. Louis's experience of the garden's green enclosures inaugurates a sequence that expands and dramatizes the scope of pastoral's ideological force and its role in constituting sets of gendered relations as part of political and civil collectivity. The garden's primal scene frames the social effects of sexual differentiation in relation to an imagined childhood innocence and community—introducing difference, competition, jealousy, desire, inclusion, and exclusion. Jinny, attracted by the motion of Louis within the hedge, sees Louis and kisses him; Susan, witnessing the kiss, is propelled into a jealous rage. Bernard breaks off boat-making with Neville to follow and comfort Susan with his vision of Elvedon. Neville will follow, looking for Bernard (who has his pocket knife) attempting to reclaim his insular world of homosocial intimacy, only to find Rhoda contently playing at ships by herself with white petals in a basin.

Variously positioned within the garden, Louis, Bernard and Neville, make and benefit from English culture. As they occupy roles that buttress and justify England's patriarchal social order, it is similarly tempting to characterize the female speakers of Woolf's play-poem as the simple objects and props of the same culture that legitimizes men as its agents. To do so, however, overlooks or misses the intricacies of female

subjectivity make available in *The Waves* and the nuanced violences of their own subjectivizations. A critical stance that reads them. however, as pure victims of patriarchal culture is as problematic as one that sees in Jinny and Susan's alliances with nature an eco-feminist perspective or mythopoetical account that unproblematically allies "the feminine" with moral goodness. Jinny and Susan themselves are certainly constituted through a process of pastoral subjectivization, but within the roles defined for them by that process, they show both unapologetic volition and force that distorts and problematizes perceptions of "woman" as a cultural object of pure consolation. In the two sections that follow, I consider the pastoral ambivalence of both Susan's and Jinny's subjectification as female citizens of empire.

IV. Susan and the Consolations of 'Natural Happiness'

Within the social roles mapped out for the speakers of *The Waves* in their childhood garden, Susan occupies the place of earth mother and poetic muse. Susan, who comes to be loved by the absent Percival, will make children and is perhaps the occasion for poetry with her "grass-green" (28) and "pear-shaped eyes" (140), but she will not make poetry. She is given to detailed but highly literal observations of the natural world, often at odds with Bernard's imaginative phrasemaking and flights of fancy. As a child, she is notable for both her beautiful eyes and the singleness of her passions and words: "'I see the beetle,' said Susan. It is black, I see; it is green I see.; I am tied down with single words" (8-9). As a child, her attention ranges from the insects in the grass to servants kissing in the kitchen garden. In responding to Jinny's kiss, she espouses jealousy and acquisitiveness, abjuring the company of the others and fleeing

into the solitude of the woods: “I will take my anguish and lay it under the roots of the beech tree…I shall eat nuts and peer for eggs through the brambles and my hair will be matted and I shall sleep under hedges and drink water from ditches and die there” (7). Susan’s passions, and the sudden thwarting of the object of her attention and desire, drive her into the woods much like a feral witch-woman; her disavowal of, and self-positioning outside of, the networks of school and the companionship of her peers (anterior to all social institutions) is potentially radical, but she is consoled and reabsorbed into relationality by Bernard’s tales of Elvedon and the class-driven vision of the great house with its servants. As a young woman, her observations of the natural world meld with her own burgeoning fertility. The short syntactic patterning of her observations barely distinguishes between self and world: “The day waves yellow with all its crops. The earth hangs heavy beneath me…All the world is breeding. The flies are going from grass to grass. The flowers are thick with pollen” (72). The equivalence she expresses between her phenomenal self and the countryside of rural England exemplifies her role as future breeder of the nation’s subjects and likewise authorizes her gendered position as the center of a domestic pastoral universe.

> At this hour, this still early hour, I think I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees; mine are the flocks of birds, and this young hare who leaps, at the last moment, when I step almost on him. Mine is the heron that stretches its vast wings lazily; and the cow that creaks as it pushes one foot before the other, munching; and the wild swooping swallow, and the faint red in the sky, and the green when the red fades; the silence and the bell; the call of the man fetching

> cart-horses from the fields—all are mine. (70)

Susan's expanded pastoral ethos is amplified by a similar temporal relationship between her and the cycle of the calendar year:

> I am not a woman, but the light that falls on this gate, on this ground. I am the seasons, I think sometimes January, May, November; the mud; the mist; the dawn…What I give is fell…I like best the stare of the shepherds met in the road; the stare of gipsy women beside a cart in a ditch sucking their children as I shall suckle my children." (70)

In the expression of her self, Susan speaks of a pastoral, both alien and native, that authorizes her earth sensuality and "primal sensibilities." She is allied with the earth and the seasons and finds sympathetic resonance in the images of rustic otherness by which she naturalizes and justifies her centrality to a paradigm of Englishness built on a pastoral ideal. While Susan may not self-consciously quote poetry or literature, the opening of Catullus 85: *Odi et amo, "*I hate and I love," intersects with and animates her trenchant characterization as mother and muse. In her multiple repetitions of this formulation throughout the novel, Susan expresses not only her singular passions and the brute force of desire and acquisitiveness, but calls attention to her status as an object of poetic attention constituted by and through cultural discourse. Through her repetitions and multiple redeployments of Catullus, she threatens to disrupt the notion of woman as purely non-volitional object of patriarchal discourse through the sheer excess of her will. Yet, even Susan's violent passion is, over time, sublimated and given shape by domesticity and motherhood in service of English imperialism:

> Whether it is summer, whether it is winter, I no longer know by the moor grass, heath flower only by the steam on the window-pane or the frost on the window-pane. When the lark peels high his ring of sound and it falls through the air like an apple paring, I stoop; I feed my baby. I, who used to walk through the beech woods noting the jay's feather turning blue as it falls, past the shepherd and the tramp, who stared at the woman squatted beside a tilted cart in a ditch, go room to room with a duster…making of my own body a hollow, a warm shelter for my child to sleep in….His eyes will see when mine are shut…I shall go mixed with them beyond my body and I shall see India. He will come home bringing me trophies to be laid at my feet. He will increase my possessions. (125)

In the passage above, the subject of Susan's prediction, the third person object of heroic action, amalgamates Percival, who has already gone to India in service of empire, and Susan's future sons. The indistinguishable generation of men gestures to and implicates Susan's pastoral—the cycle of seasons with which she is associated — in the historical continuity and time of empire. Likewise, in fulfilling her role as mother and muse, Susan's becomes utterly indistinguishable from the pastoral topos of its ideological instantiation. The pastoral geography of Susan's body and her wild volition becomes circumscribed by and contained within its domestic dwelling; the glass of the windows mediate and even block her intimate connection to, and detailed observations of, the natural and wider world and the seasons which she no longer sees. Within her trenchantly domesticated world, Susan remains aware of the repurposing of

her vital energies. In a moment of pastoral inversion, she observes: “But I never rise at dawn and see the purple drops in the cabbage leaves; the red drops in the roses.” (125) By both eliding and evoking the minute arcadian details of the rural morning, she ironically marks the distance between her previous freedom and current use. Susan spends her earthy sensuality overwhelmingly in stewarding a domestic empire that is likewise justified by biologically motivated concepts of a female contentedness that strips Susan of self-determination.

The animus of Susan’s passion instead becomes channeled into the labor of childcare and household management:

> So I am driven forward, till I could cry, as I move from dawn to dusk opening and shutting, ‘No more. I am glutted with natural happiness’ Yet more will come, more children; more cradles, more baskets in the kitchen and hams ripening; and onions glistening; and more beds of lettuce and potatoes. I am blown like a leaf by the gale; now brushing the wet grass, now whirled up. I am glutted with natural happiness; and wish sometimes that the fullness would pass from me and the weight of the sleeping house rise… (125)

Simultaneously, Susan will be a source of cultural continuity for her children through the songs and tales she tells them in their infancy: “ I sing my song by the fire like an old shell murmuring on the beach” (124). In this, she becomes much like Anonymous of *A Room of One’s Own*, that woman who spins songs to her children through the long winter. As a poet, however, the truth she legislates is not one of heroic self-actualization or radical change but rather the song of sleepers, of cultural inertia and

the preservation of the status quo: “Sleep, sleep, I say warning off with my voice all who rattle milk-cans, fire at rooks, shoot rabbits, or in any way bring the shock of destruction near this wicker cradle, laden with soft limbs, curled under pink coverlet.” (124) As mother-poet and murmuring shell, Susan becomes part of the pastoralization that protects, cherishes and perpetuates the national ideology of Britain’s Island Arcadia in service of the cherished mother and child with which it is likewise burdened. Susan’s contextualization as mother and muse produces an understandable and easily available archetype by which to ascertain her cultural utility, but also problematizes the purely positive cultural value of maternity by implicating motherhood in projects of empire, and defamiliarizing its conciliatory aspects, and allowing her to express hate and acquisitiveness. The ambivalent signification of Susan’s pastoral ethos likewise plays to the role of pastoral poetry in naturalizing and enshrining the mother-muse function as a carrier of colonial principles, implicating the organization of domestic life in larger projects of empire. Susan’s “natural happiness,” now the stoic endurance of a pastoral subjectivization that drives her to reproduce, troubles the consolations of English domesticity and its feminine prescriptions, and exposes them as violent colonial ideology.

V. Thus speaks Arethusa: Jinny’s Green World Romance

If Susan is occupied breeding heroes for empire, Jinny, who interrupts and shatters Louis’s garden reverie with her kiss, occupies a complementary socio-cultural role as a figure for male erotic contemplation and heroic action. While Susan becomes a topos or a location, *The Waves’s* childhood garden manifests Jinny as an unbound

principle of erotic drives. As a "creature of physical sensation and immediacy" (Schlack, 104) she constitutively vacillates between states of pleasure and pain associated with sexual desire. Coming to a libidinal awareness of her body, Jinny observes the alternating extremes of hot and cold: "The back of my hand burns…but the palm is clammy and damp with dew." (Woolf, 5) As the garden allegory unfolds, the children largely make observations about what they see and hear, narrating their world with choral sensibilities. Along with the others, Jinny observes the emergent phenomenal world, registering with aesthetic delight the play of colors she perceives: a crimson tassel or a gold thread, a succession of bubbles in a silver chain. (4-5) With the exception of Neville, however, who notes and observes the coolness of separate stones beneath his bare feet, Jinny is the first to express an awareness of her embodied existence in relation to the wider world: "I burn…I shiver…out of this sun; into this shadow" (6). Jinny's sensual experience of her own selfhood may be encapsulated by accounts of desire in antiquity that equate the paradoxical simultaneity of opposed bodily sensation with erotic desire. In *Eros The Bittersweet*, Anne Carson claims that the contrasting sensations documented by erotic poetry have some basis in ancient physiology as pleasure is associated with liquidity, heat, and melting, while unpleasantness is equated with freezing and frigid states. (7) A fragment from Sophocles's satyr play, "The Lovers of Achilles," in which the experience of erotic desire is compared to ice cubes melting in the hot hands of children, peripherally echoes through Jinny's contrary experience of her own extremities. In accounting for the way desire bridges the space between extremities of sensation, Carson describes

eros as a verb or a motion, preserving the "radiant absence" of desire, while also gesturing toward the persistent tropes of pursuit and flight native to classical erotic poetry (18). In the opening chapter of *The Waves*, Jinny identifies herself through a self-same expression of poetic motion and aesthetic delight: "I dance. I ripple. I am thrown over you like a net of light. I lie quivering flung over you." (7)

Jinny's kinesthetic eroticism anticipates and drives her encounter with Louis within the world of his pastoral enclosure. Compelled by a confounded force of motion and curiosity, Jinny finds it difficult to distinguish between the life force that might animate the landscape and that which animates her own body. [57] Jinny's erotic capacity draws from a mystified green world source that is both empowering and plausibly nonvolitional as she crashes into Louis's hedge:

> I was running," said Jinny "after breakfast. I saw leaves moving in a hole in the hedge. I thought, ' That is a bird on a nest.' I parted them and looked; but there was not bird on a nest. The leaves went on moving. I was frightened. I ran past Susan, past Rhoda, and Neville and Bernard in the tool-house talking. I cried as I ran, faster and faster. What moved the leaves? What moves my heart, my legs? And I dashed in here, seeing you green as a bush, like a branch, very still, Louis, with your eyes fixed. ' Is he dead?" I thought, and kissed you, with my heart jumping under my pink frock like the leaves which go on moving though there is nothing to move them… (7)

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[57] In this sense, Woolf also anticipates and corroborates the green world scope of Dylan Thomas's "force that through the green fuse drives the flower."

Jinny, propelled by curiosity and an almost uncontrollable physicality, interrupts Louis's green enclosure—her heart "jumping under" her "pink frock like the leaves that go on moving, though there is nothing to move them." The motion of Jinny's "heart jumping" announces a hart leaping, with musical symmetry, as she crashes into the hedge, prefiguring the various metaphors of animal nature that will be used to represent her sexual allure throughout the novel. In recounting the onset of adolescence and womanhood for the three female speakers, Bernard describes them as "startled foals" and Jinny as the first to come "sidling up to the gate to eat sugar" (183). Bernard's metaphor hints at the process by which the unmitigated force of embodied female sensuality becomes regulated and disciplined by adult sexuality, much like a horse may be enticed to its own taming. In girlhood, however, Rhoda describes Jinny as one who "rides like a gull on wave" (76). In narrating her own power, Jinny returns to thoughts of the childhood garden and its erotic force as a source of personal autonomy and freedom from domestication: "I shall not let myself be attached to one person only. I do not want to be fixed, to be pinioned. I tremble, I quiver like the leaf in the hedge, as I sit dangling my feet, on the edge of the bed, with a new day to break open…" (39). And yet, despite the autonomy conferred upon her by the principles of motion and by the acknowledgment of her own erotic nature, Jinny is coded according to literary conventions as prey, participating in a process of pastoral subjectivization through green world myths that establish her as a quest reward or the object of heroic action.

Attending to Jinny, Woolf's text utilizes the pastoral myth of Arethusa, the

river nymph and daughter of Nereus who flees from sexual pursuit by Alpheus through the mountains of Arcadia.[58] The Arethusean sensibilities of *The Waves* are given in reference to Jinny's often liquid or rippling nature and persistent reference to movement and flight in her self-characterization: "I ripple all down my narrow body; evenly thin legs ripple like a stalk in the wind…I leap like one of those flames that run between the cracks of the earth; I move, I dance, I never cease to move and dance" (28-29). The recurrence of liquid movement reminiscent of a mountain cataract amplifies Jinny's erotic autonomy even as it reciprocally invokes the precariousness and isolation of the alpine passes. In the previous chapter, I discussed how Tennyson's "Come Down O Maid" makes available a signifying system that bifurcates pastoral sensibilities. Within this signifying system, Jinny belongs to the autonomy of the

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[58] In order to escape the attentions of the river god, she is transformed into a stream that then flows underground though a crack in the earth. She eventually merges with the sea and reemerges on the island of Ortygia in Sicily. Arethusa, as invoked by Virgil, is a specifically a Muse of pastoral poetry. Arethusa's story is told by Ovid (Book 5) , Virgil(*Georgics* Book 4 433, Eclogue 10), in Milton's "Lycidas," and notably in Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Arethusa." The poem is part of a network of Shelleyean sensibilities that permeate *The Waves*. The first stanza of Shelley's "Arethusa" from which some of Jinny's iconography might be derived, is as follows:

I.
Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams;
And gliding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

mountain passes, while Susan belongs to the azure pillars of hearth and home. Counterposed to Susan, who expresses antipathy to the mountains and fir trees and her hatred of boarding school in Switzerland and alliances with agrarian fields, Jinny sees them as a desired habitat (70). Her affinities for the highland topography and her Arethusean sensibilities together define her solitary and uninhibited nature as invitation to pursuit and erotic encounter. She records a moment of social encounter and seduction of one of her suitors as an imaginative tryst highly aestheticized by pastoral convention: “We are alone on an Alpine pass. He stands melancholy on the crest of the road. I stoop. I pick a blue flower and fix it, standing on tiptoe to reach him, in his coat. That is my moment of ecstasy” (75) . The Aresthusean appeal of Jinny’s nymph-like self-expression evokes an unapologetic world of heterosexual pursuit that never settles into the confines of marriage. The remote climes of the mountain landscape remain resistant to, but in relation with, the domestic contextualization of the river valley which Bernard recapitulates in his metaphor of the foals as the customary telos of British interwar womanhood. While Susan may have been the first to become “fully woman,” Jinny prevails, in her own words, as “a goat leaping from crag to crag, a woman living perilously past thirty” (126). The doubleness of Jinny's pastoral subjectivization inheres in the essentialized feminine nature which infuses her with its erotic potentiality, positioning her in relation to paradigms of male desire, and the pleasure she derives from the power to provoke and command that same desire. She entices male heroic action, but remains locked into place by her socio-cultural utility and the repetitive cycles of pursuit and reward that

Woolf ambivalently codes as part of a sadomasochistic imaginary bound to her subjectivization.

In the section that precedes the fifth interlude, which showcases the sun's zenith in the sky, all six speakers gather at a dinner in honor of Percival's departure for India. Rhoda and Louis conspire in imaging the scene as a pagan festival as they watch the others. Their observations of revelry and ritual occur in a parenthetical exchange that splits Jinny's own narration of the event. As Percival enters, Jinny speaks: "Rippling gold, I say to him 'Come'…and he comes; he crosses the room where I sit, with my dress like a veil billowing around me on the gilt chair. Our hands touch, our bodies burst into fire. The chair, the cup, the table—nothing remains unlit. All quivers, all kindles, all burns clear" (101). Jinny understands the convocation of childhood friends as a nuptial ceremony that evokes Arthurian legends and green world romance; the iconic chivalric tableau establishes the potential heternormative matrimonial relationship as a core value of heroic action, one that precedes Percival's departure for the wilds of the colonial periphery. Jinny meditates on the ripeness of her time of life and body in language that links together temporal and material abundance and her sexual command: "Days and days are to come; winter days, summer days; we have scarcely broken into our hoard. Now the fruit is swollen beneath the leaf. The room is golden, I say to him, 'Come.'" (102) Through Jinny's eyes, the evening's festivities are a burgeoning ritual of courtly love and fertility with her in the middle. Enshrining the union of two is the gilded opulence and wealth of London as cosmopolitan and imperial center likewise linked to natural and temporal plenty. At

the same time, Rhoda and Louis perceive a darker pagan corollary to the scene that ironizes Jinny's moment of sexual rapture by positioning her as the instrument of a larger social process belonging to communal reproduction:

> The flames of the festival rise high…The great procession passes, flinging green boughs and flowering branches. Their horns spill blue smoke; their skins are dappled red and yellow in the torchlight. They throw violets. They deck the beloved with garlands and with laurel leaves, there on the ring of turf where the steep-backed hills come down. The procession passes. ()

In the floral and vegetal imagery of the fertility festival, Rhoda adduces a wilder and less controlled primitivism to the genteel civility of Percival's party. In her reading of *The Waves,* Laura Doyle highlights this moment as one that stages and reveals the "introjection of barbarity for the imperial community." (325) For Doyle, Percival is a "pagan-conqueror figure" who crosses the border into savage lands, bringing them into the scope of his companions at home, and enabling the internalization of an "alien Other" by which Englishness achieves its purified imperial identity. As Rhoda tropes on the themes of male hero and female enticement familiar to Jinny's chivalric fantasy, she also positions them in relation to nativist and racialized myths that underpin England's Arcadian identity. At the heart of this myth-making is the ambivalent eros of the white woman's sanctified sexuality that not only positions Jinny at the center of an imperial apparatus as enticement to male heroic action, but simultaneously shows her to be the object of a violent demand. As Percival approaches Jinny "rippling gold," Rhoda observes: "Horns and trumpets…ring out. Leaves unfold; the stag blares in the

thicket," revealing the pageantry of courtly romance and conventions of quest and reward on which Rhoda obliquely tropes to rest also on bestiality (101). Jinny sees herself as the commander of male erotic attention, the imperiatrix by which erotic energies are organized into social hierarchy; Rhoda's narration nevertheless and simultaneously shows her to be prey. The simultaneity by which Jinny may be both a Guinevere and a stag splits Jinny's purported feminine agency into dual visions of sexual potency from which she derives pleasure, and the performance of an internalized sexual subjugation for patriarchal gratification. The stag blaring, like the horns and trumpets that ring out, sonically marks and celebrates an animalistic rutting season. While the bellow of the stag may be the male's mating call, it is Jinny who initiates the ritual and calls to Percival. Rhoda's narration identifies Jinny with the stag's phallic annunciation of desire while simultaneously taking into account the stag as the traditional object of hunting rituals and practices and the codification of the hunt as a class-driven pastime.[59] The pleasure and power Jinny experiences from the stag's potency nevertheless stands in relation to a network of green world significations that disciplines and regulates her libidinal energies.

Jinny gives full voice to this pastoral overdetermination as she narrates her life "in the body":

> I am pursued through the forest…Now let us sing our love song—Come, come, come. Now my gold signal is like a dragonfly flying taut. Jug, jug, jug. I

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[59] The classical mythology, the stag is likewise sacred to the goddess Artemis.

> sing like the nightingale whose melody is crowded in the too narrow passage of her throat…Now I hear the crash and rending of boughs and the crack of antlers as if the beasts of the forest were all hunting, all rearing high and plunging down among the thorns. One has pierced me. One is driven deep within me. And velvet flowers and leaves whose coolness has been stood in water wash me round and sheathe me, embalming me. (129)

In reference that ranges from the Philomela story of the classical lexicon through its iterations in English poetry to Dido's hunting party and seduction in Book IV of the Aeneid, Jinny expresses the (over)fullness of her erotic sensuality through the detritus of green world myths. As she is pursued through the forest, Jinny's love song evokes any number of *carpe diem* poems from Marlowe and Raleigh to Herrick and Marvell that take the enticement of young women to pastoral trysts by courtiers as their subject. Simultaneously, she places the burgeoning history of these pastoral seductions into the throat of Philomela as a symbol of male sexual violence and the poetic appropriation of female voices.[60] In the endlessly appropriated song of the nightingale (jug, jug, jug) that echoes the invitation to sexual gratification (Come, come, come) Woolf locates a fraught history of gendered violence and aesthetic representation, pointing to what Barbara Johnson has called the "undecideability between female pleasure and female violation…always already…at the heart of the literary

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[60] Note articles including Hartman's "Voice of the Shuttle" and Lynne Enterline on Philomel sexual violence and poetic voice. "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours" by Patricia Joplin, Interpreting Nightingales by Jeni Williams; "symbol of constructed gender identity…the perpetual mediation of the feminine voice by sexual desire" Barbara Johnson "Muteness Envy"

canon." (152) The *jug, jug, jug,* of Jinny's nightingale utterance acknowledges both this perversity and the ongoing cultural titillation provided by these obfuscated boundaries in its address to TS Eliot's *Wasteland* : "And still she cried, and still the world pursues / '*Jug Jug*' to dirty ears." Moreover, in the passage's denial of Keats's "full-throated ease," Woolf refuses the elision of sexual violence internal to narratives of green world seduction.[61]

Likewise, from the *Aeneid*, Woolf derives not only a violent figuration of erotic longing and the highly ornamented rituals of seduction, but the telos of a specifically female desire that is non-volitional and tragic in its ends. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil characterizes Dido, in her desire for Aeneas, as a wounded hart pierced by the dart or hunting arrow of an inattentive shepherd. The deer, who is perhaps unaware that she is already dead, flees through glades and woods with the deadly shaft in her side. The image of Dido as a wounded forest animal who is aware only of her desire but unaware of her mortal peril precedes the lavish hunting party in which Dido, ornamented in gold and purple, and Aeneas, likewise ornamented by the sun and by his comparison to Apollo in the rites of a spring procession, enact what Dido thinks of as a nuptial ceremony. Despite her previous vows "to live apart [from matrimony] like some wild creature" Dido is compelled to seduce Aeneas. Forced into a cave by a sudden storm, they have sex as the mountain gulleys and ravines flash with flooded waters and nymphs wail a wedding hymn that sounds suspiciously like a lamentation.

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[61] "'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot/ But being too happy in thine happinessThat thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees / In some melodious plot /Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,/ Singest of summer in full-throated ease." (Ode to a Nightingale, line 5-10)

The moment of ‘marriage’ and its consummation is for Dido the accomplishment of her desire and a new beginning. It also, as the text ironically conveys, unknown to her, the “first day of her death.” When Aeneas abandons both Dido and Carthage to pursue his duty of founding empires, Dido is driven into a frenzy with grief and kills herself. In Virgil’s epic, “unhappy” Dido is neither the architect of her desire for Aeneas, which is wrought by Venus and by Juno for their own purposes, nor its termination, which is driven by Jove and the necessities of empire. Dido’s subsequent suicide (“neither fated nor deserved”) is both an escape from unresolved mourning and an effort to reclaim the agency stripped from her by Eros. [62]

Like Dido decked in gold to meet her mate, Jinny’s “gold signal” reappears as a celebratory pennant or heraldic flag. In another phallic evocation of Jinny’s sexuality, the flag flies “taut,” at full mast. The dragonfly, as an emblem, reflects Jinny’s espousal of flight, sexual autonomy, and the understanding of herself as predatory creature. Although the dragonfly itself is a hunter, the passage ends, recalling both the stag and deer-Dido pierced by arrows, with Jinny as one of the hunted and re-feminized beasts of the forest. Much like the constricted throat of the nightingale is clotted with its cultural inheritance, Jinny’s pennant vibrates with the “tautness” of sexual urgency and the “taughtness” of a disciplined feminine erotic. The erotic power that Jinny assumes in her evasion of domestic fixity (like Dido’s “wild beast”) is nevertheless circumscribed by a sadomasochistic process of pastoral

[62] Appropriately, Dido’s tragic end is exacerbated by competing aspects of “female acquisitiveness” as inflections of the very patriarchy criticized by Woolf in *The Waves*. She is a victim of Juno’s machinations as wife to thwart Jove, and Venus’s investment in Aeneas as mother.

subjectivization and its elegiac consolations. As she falls upon and is penetrated by the thorns of green world conventions, she is received by a responsive and consoling landscape which both enwombs *and* entombs her in an image of perfected feminine consolation. In this final pastoral contextualization, Jinny resembles nothing so much as one of the many Pre-Raphaelite renderings of beautiful dead or dying women and their watery graves, like John William Waterhouse's "Lady of Shalott" (1888) or John Everett Millais's "Ophelia" (1852).[63] From the ventriloquized cadences of "come, come, come," to the erection of her gold signal, the vaginal and contracted passageway of the nightingale's throat, the thorns that penetrate and pierce her, and the landscape which ultimately "sheathe" her, the disruptive sexual energies of Jinny's narration are reassimilated by the conventions of pastoral elegy's male-coded frames. In the fetishistic allure of the passage's last moments, Jinny's phallic power and erotic autonomy are converted into a final figuration of Ophelia—the green girl of Shakespeare's pastoral world, "incapable of her own distress."[64]

Disciplined by and through varying layers of pastoral significations, Susan and Jinny are imbricated by deeply gendered roles that render them as pacified objects of cultural utility. As female subjects of empire regulated by pastoral ideals, the possibilities for a full articulation of their selfhood exist within aggressively heteronormative paradigms and in relation to a larger patriarchal order. As a mother

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[63] Similar renderings of Ophelia include Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Hunt. This depiction of Ophelia, is in fact, now so cultural ubiquitous that it constitutes a study in it own right. It even has its own Instagram hashtag.

[64] See *Hamlet* Act 5.2. As "enticement" to male heroic action it is over Ophelia's body and literally in Ophelia's grave that Hamlet claims his name assumes the mantle of tragic hero.

and wife, Susan is finally and firmly lodged in rural family life producing children for empire, and Jinny, with her penchant for spectacle and sensuality, in the metropole as figure for male fascination. They may either create culture by giving birth, or they may provide the feminine figure by which men justify their own efforts at culture making but they do not, strictly speaking, make culture themselves. Or, more accurately, they do not see themselves as making culture. This lack of perceived agency in some way accounts for the ironic resignation ("We make life. So they say.") that accompanies Jinny's own observations of cultural process and power. And yet despite this lack of perceived cultural agency, Woolf portrays them as neither fully caricature nor fully victim; rather they are subjects thoroughly colonized by pastoral ideologies that position them in roles adjunct to an imperial culture that produces and enshrines them. They enjoy the privileges of their subjectivization by finding comfort and pleasure in their roles, even as they apprehend and push against the limitations of subject positions demarcated by pastoral sensibilities. Jinny glories in her command over men even as she fears the precipitously brief tenure of physical beauty and the violent ambivalences of erotic experience. Susan relishes the fell and fierce authority of her maternal status even as she laments her lost freedom and girlhood.

Of the six speaking characters, Rhoda, with her "ill-fitting body" and patterns of cognitive abstraction, remains the most trenchantly outside a knowable social and symbolic order (76). Rhoda's malleable and shifting sense of self-identity evades assimilation to its gendered cultural utility, largely resisting the pastoral

subjectivization demonstrated by the others.[65] As "hysteric" to Susan's "mother" or Jinny's "prostitute," Rhoda never seems to fully materialize or reconcile with the material world, remaining an aporia within the novel's sexual economy.[66] If Jinny and Susan reside in a world of sexual complementarity—that is, in roles of phallic femininity defined by a process of pastoral subjectivization and in relation to larger patriarchal paradigms—Rhoda's amorphous illegibility resists and exceeds the process of subjectivization evidenced by the others. She instead asserts a supplementarity that exceeds or escapes a role prescribed by and through knowable pastoral orders.[67] While Susan and Jinny enter and occupy their rural and urban habitats with a certitude naturalized by pastoral convention, Rhoda lays in a bed of light and becomes amorphous. She enters into or inhabits poetic spaces qualified by liminality and codified by a world of ideal forms and desired elsewheres. If the leitmotifs of Susan and Jinny's pastoral-poetic subjectivizations manifest in the recurrence of possessive passions and feral maternal instinct, or in the intersecting violences of erotic drives

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[65] The kind of subjectivity Rhoda expresses in *The Waves* is the kind that might be challenged by attempting to cross a puddle or by someone else's reflection in the mirror, as she narrates here: "Wind and storm colored July. Also, in the middle, cadaverous, awful, lay the grey puddle in the courtyard, when , holding an envelope in my hand I carried a message. I came to the puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather. I was wafted down tunnels. then very gingerly, I pushed my foot across. I laid my hand against a brick wall. I returned very painfully, drawing back my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle. This is the life then to which I am committed." (45) or (29) " I have no face. other people have faces" . Likewise, she floats out of her body at night.

[66] Terms are Jane Marcus's, while there is certainly a more nuanced discussion called for in the exploration of these designations, I take them, of example, not to mean that Jinny is actually a prostitute but rather to shorthand the cultural terrain to which Susan and Jinny are correspondingly assigned and to point out the ways in which Rhoda is categorically denied placement in [the prevailing] symbolic order.

[67] "'It is the strange essence of the supplement not to have essentiality: it may always not have taken place. Moreover, literally, it has never taken place: it is never present, here and now. If it were, it would not be what it is, a supplement, taking and keeping the place of the other." Derrida, *Of Grammatology*

and green world aesthetics, Rhoda's desire to escape the overdeterminations of a body constituted by sexual utility rely on lyric structures attributable to either a non-codified pastoral imaginary or in the promise of poetic space itself to supply a logic of feminine alterity as a plausible feminist subtext that resists, however painfully, a dominant patriarchal social order and its prescriptions. Unlike Jinny and Susan, whose allusive networks reify and buttress their place as women within this prevailing order, the poetic spaces that Rhoda creates within her soliloquies suggest both her antipathies to their world and the possibility of alternate ones.

VI: Rhoda: The Foam on the Rocks, the Girl in the Room

In rebelling against her regimented school routine, Susan reviles "crippled days, like moths with shriveled wings unable to fly," longing for the moment that she can come home to the countryside, fling herself on the banks of the river, answering to that which "has grown in [her]" to "give and to be given… solitude in which to unfold my possessions" (37). Jinny similarly hates the cold mornings when her feet touch the floor and the "bruised" and "imperfect" days but is buoyed by her intrinsic sense of pleasure and the promise of "brilliant parties," wearing "necklaces and a white dress without sleeves at night" and in the prospect of courting rituals in which "one man will single me out and tell me what he has told no other person" (38-39). Both young women feel hindered by the institutional conditioning of school but find a place for their unfolding sexuality in the knowable socio-cultural dynamics that discipline and

answer to their desires.[68] By contrast, Rhoda's desires find less concrete manifestations and more minute agonies. Susan and Jinny may quantify their suffering in days; Rhoda laments the hours and hours of a single drawn out day before she can "put out the light and lie suspended on [her] bed above the world, before [she] can let the day drop down, before [she] can let [her] tree grow, quivering, in green pavilions above my head" (39). Rhoda's developing sexual consciousness finds articulation through an abstract and visionary metaphor of arboreal flowering that, like, Jinny's own sexual self-narrative, addresses itself to an ambivalent or bi-sexual phallic imaginary. Rhoda's quivering tree, however, unlike Jinny's stag or taut pennant, finds no corresponding social reality to which it will conform, but rather retreats from it, banished by the demands of intersubjective experience. She continues: "Here I cannot let it grow. Somebody knocks through it. They ask questions, they interrupt, they throw it down"(39). Rhoda's selective determination not only confirms the irreconcilability of her particular pastoral vision with the quotidian reality of boarding school, but also her instinct to preserve and protect that same vision for a more fertile ground not locatable in the present moment. Unlike those of Susan and Jinny, Rhoda's pastoral longings are in the strictest sense utopic or without place. Rhoda must instead imagine these locales into being.

The same chapter that features Susan's burgeoning fertility and rural-domestic

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[68] Complicated later in life, for example, by the ways Susan feels the deep confines of motherhood " "Life stands round me like a glass round the imprisoned reed." (140); "I am sick of the body, sick of my own craft, industry, and cunning…" (139) or that Jinny comes to understand the precariousness, also, of a life lived in the body. Their early inhabited roles further seem to circumscribes their ability to produce or bring into the world something new.

meditations as a young woman also places them alongside Jinny's and Rhoda's divided experiences of a London ball; while Jinny ripples gold and unfurls "like a fern" or a plant in the stream in the radiant and opulent environment of the ball, Rhoda wanders the margins, anxiously escaping the trauma of enforced socialization into imagined poetic space (77):

> I shall edge behind them…as if I saw someone I know. But I know no one. I shall twitch the curtain rod and look at the moon. Draughts of oblivion shall quench my agitation. The door opens; the tiger leaps. The door opens; terror rushes in; terror upon terror, pursuing me. Let me furtively visit treasures I have laid apart. Pools lie on the other side of the world, reflecting marble columns. The swallow dips her wings in dark pools. But here the door opens and people come; they come towards me. Throwing faint smiles to mask their cruelty, their indifference, they seize me. The swallow dips her wings; the moon rides through blue seas alone. I must take his hand; I must answer. But what answer shall I give? I am thrust back to stand burning in this clumsy, this ill-fitting body, to receive the shafts of indifference, and his scorn, I who long for marble columns and pools on the other side of the world where the swallow dips her wings. (75-76)

As she skirts the limits of enforced convocation, Rhoda attempts flight through solitary poetic reverie, not unlike Keats, as he is drowsily induced into full poetic and pastoral vision in "Ode to a Nightingale." Yet, her efforts to attain a state of blissful escape, in the "draughts of oblivion" and moonlight that might ease her suffering, are

thwarted and interrupted by social mores which continue to anchor her, painfully, in the present circumstance of the party. The door that repeatedly opens does not supply the escape Rhoda seeks, but, unlike Jinny's pleasure, rather intensifies the affliction and persecution she experiences as a social subject. In response to the terror produced by the cosmopolitan gathering and its enforced rituals of heteronormative courtship, Rhoda returns to the trove of poetic experience which she hoards like the imperial riches of the lyrical-pastoral interchapter that immediately precedes it. The resources Rhoda seeks, however, manifest themselves as talismans of an other-worldliness whose possibility is given in emblems of purified and idealized classical order accessible through aesthetic experience.

As panacea to the terrors of London's cultured sensibilities, Rhoda finds figures whose particularity she effaces in favor of heavily aestheticized, atemporal forms:

> I also see the railings of the square, and two people without faces, leaning like statues against the sky. There is, then, a world immune from change. When I have passed through this drawing room flickering with tongues that cut me like knives, making me stammer, making me lie, I find faces rid of features, robed in beauty. (77)

Rhoda's apprehension of distilled forms in the outline of two lovers in the moonlight establishes a world of meaning alongside her quotidian existence normally made

available through art and aesthetic experience.[69] The room of flickering tongues requires Rhoda to produce a self or identity that feels both incoherent and false to her while the moonlight tableau she subsequently constructs stands counterposed to the artificial sociality of the gathering. This dual perception of eternal and temporal forms affirms and defines Rhoda's own liminality as someone who simultaneously occupies multiple worlds and identities. She gestures to the tension between identity and non-identify and her awareness of the limits of her sexed body prisoned in present moment of the party, and the understanding of herself as an entity of imagined alterity as she strikingly observes: "I am the foam that sweeps and fills the uttermost rims of the rocks with whiteness; I am also a girl here in this room" (77).

Rhoda's uncanny sense of embodiment along with her persistently expressed social- and self-alienation fuels readings that focus on her as a figure that, along with challenging unitary conceptions of selfhood and subjectivity, also stands in for and reach toward a queer and unrepresentable feminine erotic. While the marble columns, moon, effaced lovers, and distant locales to which Rhoda turns are tonally consistent with the dreamy lyricism of say Keats's "Calidore" or his aesthetically driven and meditative odes, they also gesture to the possibility of a specifically feminine elsewhere. Annette Oxindine reads the "dark pools" in which "the swallow dips her wings" and to which Rhoda recursively returns as a deep reservoir for an explicitly

[69] See *Sketch of the Past*, as corroborating Woolf's own sense of hidden patterns and submerged meanings: "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 this 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." (72-73)

lesbian female sexuality. Moreover, in the suggestion of both nightingale and swallow resides the mythopoetic resonances of Procne and Philomel—whose story Jane Marcus has likewise linked to an allegory of feminist reading in Woolf's texts.[70] Their readings, along with Patricia Cramer's, rely on abundant paratextual evidence available in Woolf's oeuvre to furnish a portrait of Rhoda as burgeoning with libidinal queer longing, finding in her "replete sexuality" what Oxindine calls a "heavily coded treatment of patriarchal resistance and lesbian desire." [71] Cramer, likewise, reads Rhoda as a "lesbian outsider… [who] seeks a life outside existing female paradigms" (450). Readings that identify Rhoda as a queer or lesbian outsider overlap with readings that link her liminal and shifting sense of self-identity to an inchoate or failed subjectivity.[72] The degree to which Rhoda's experience of self does or does not become culturally legible (for this reading—that is constituted through and by pastoral

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[70] For more on Woolf and Procne as the feminist reader and interpreter of her sister's tragedy, see Jane Marcus (1984)

[71] The rich paratextual apparatus includes Woolf's contemporaneous short fiction "A Women's College from Outside" as well as early holography drafts of the novel and biographical details drawn from Woolf's letters and diaries.

[72] For further criticism on *The Waves*, Rhoda, and the legibility of subjective experience see Garrett Stewart, *Catching the Stylistic Drift* (1987) Minow-Pinkey, and Judith Little, *The Experimental Self: Dialogic Subjectivity in Woolf, Pym, and Brooke-Rose*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1996; "Rhoda is an "absolutist of the imagination" (67) Rhoda appropriates a traditionally masculine quest (Shelleyean, symbolic) for the absolute" (68) Also: Chloe Taylor's "Kristevan themes in *The Waves*"

While readings like those of Cramer, Oxindine, and Myk attempt to turn Rhoda's semiotic crises toward a figuration of non-heteronormative or explicitly lesbian potentiality, readings persist like those of Beverly Ann Schlack who continue to describe Rhoda's effacement within the novel as evidence of a constitutive lack or failure on her part. For example, Susan Lorch has argued that Rhoda lacks creativity to survive in the world and therefore cannot make meaning. (Susan Lorsch, *Where Nature Ends* 142) Most recently, Molly Hite in *Woolf's Ambiguities* has insisted that neither Rhoda nor the other female speakers in *The Waves* "have the education, public status, or the confidence to represent her terrifying vision to others in the mode of either philosophy or the lyric." She further describes Rhoda as "cut off… from public competence" and "more disturbed than resistant."

forms) contributes to what Oxindine neatly terms her "semiotic crisis" at the intersection of sexual signification and symbolization.

It is in this sense that Rhoda's suicide late in the novel—a death that is heavily alluded to and prefigured in her own soliloquies but occurs, like Percival's, outside the narrative space—appears both as consequence of Rhoda's trenchant illegibility and as a critique of the network of patriarchal signification that excludes her—"a sign of the lesbian's effacement within a social and linguistic system that denies her an articulation of self."[73] Yet, as Barbara Johnson argues in her own germinal reading of female muteness and its relation to power and victimhood within the aesthetic tradition, to escape or resist through a poetics of silence does not necessarily mean to speak; the cultural illegibility which is the foundation of Rhoda's resistance to pastoral subjectification requires that Rhoda remain outside and unreadable by its dominant signifying order. Rhoda remains, therefore, on the margins—a punished or fugitive figure that manages to signify largely through its oppression, exclusion, or withdrawal. While Rhoda's social illegibility and suicide may provide a rebuke to the system of pastoral signification that discursively produces a Jinny and a Susan and that likewise naturalizes a system of hierarchal gender relations within Britain's Island Arcadia and imperial center, it does little necessarily to engage the radical feminist potential which which Woolf seeks to inscribe pastoral. Of final interest then, in exploring the possibilities of pastoral form in *The Waves*, is the way in which Rhoda's semiotic

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[73] Oxindine, 204

crisis might be read as queering the pastoral poetics implicated in Woolf's critique of patriarchy and empire.

VII. Pastoral Vocation / Poetic Renewal

Rhoda's auto-erotic, emergent sexuality and her shifting, liminal sense of self-identity largely retreats from the strictures of intersubjective experience, resisting the kind of pastoral enculturation that produces the "legible" (that is, heteronormative, reproductive, female) citizen of empire. Despite this resistance, even Rhoda's solitary visions are susceptible to a variety of fantasies fueled by a colonial imaginary inseparable from a pastoral one. As a child in the garden, while the others engage in the varying social dramas and play that establish them in allegorical relation to each other, Rhoda rocks white petals back and forth in a brown basin imaging them to be ships in a storm, simulating a detailed and solitary fantasy of bold maritime exploration:

> All my ships are white…I do not want red petals of hollyhocks or geranium. I want white petals that float when I tip the basin up…I have picked all the fallen petals and made them swim…One ship sails alone. That is my ship. It sails into icy caverns where the sea-bear barks and stalactites swing green chains. The waves rise; their crests curl; look at the lights on the mastheads. They have scattered, they have foundered, all except by my ship which mounts the wave and sweeps before the gale and reaches the islands where the parrots chatter and the creepers… (11)

The particularity of Rhoda's autotelic universe thrives on principles of selection and

self-authorization. Rocking the basin back and forth, Rhoda is the prime mover of both ships and storms, exhibiting ambitions of an environmental omnipotence that is further focalized and intensified in its individuation down to one ship. As she moves from maker to player, from elemental force to sailor, the raw materials of a pastorally constructed world —in this case the hollyhocks, geraniums and Sweet Alice—give way to the heroic narrative of epic. Similarly, as a girl at boarding school still seeking the *proper* habitation and name for her utopic desires, Rhoda seeks out other fantasies. Finding no place for the flowering of her green pavilions overhead, she bends over yet another basin imagining herself instead to be a Russian Empress:

> …as I bend my head down over the basin, I will let the Russian Empress's veil flow about my shoulders. The diamonds of the Imperial crown blaze on my forehead. I hear the roar of the hostile mob as I step out onto the balcony…I am waving my fist at an infuriated mob. 'I am your Empress, people.' My attitude is one of defiance. I am fearless. I conquer. But this is a thin dream. This is a papery tree. Miss Lambert blows it down…It is not solid; it gives me no satisfaction—this Empress dream… (39)

As an empress high above the angry mob, Rhoda assumes the role of an absolute monarch, appealing to logic of sovereignty that might provide a model of authoritative singularity within an enclosed autonomous world.[74] Yet, counterposed to the green pavilions of Rhoda's preferred day dream, the "Empress dream" is both a thin dream

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[74] See Catherine Gallagher.

and a papery tree.

Rooted in a tension between epic and pastoral sensibilities, both fantasies dramatize Rhoda's desire to escape a process of subjectivization allied to or not entirely distinct from pastoral. Both fantasies are, in their own way, motivated by epic or heroic archetypes, encoded as they are by the desire for an absolute self that confronts and defies opposition, establishing autonomy and independence in the process; and both are similarly instantiated within an imperial or colonial imaginary that itself stands in relation to or is thought through a pastoral one. Her white petal ships in a basin mime an enterprise of overseas exploration that might move her beyond a knowable and codified world, but her envisioned maritime exploration dissolves into an ellipses as it approaches the limits of colonial imagination in the vegetal sublimity of the tropical jungle's chattering parrots and creepers; likewise the quivering tree that spreads its green pavilions above her head is incommensurate with the papery tree of her Empress dream, which ultimately fails to satisfy Rhoda's search for a more sympathetic mode of relationality or legibility. Despite being motivated by initial energies or impulses understood as utopic or pastoral in their aims, they nevertheless stand in relation to the epic and therefore prove neither tenable nor hospitable to Rhoda's restless search for viable alternatives to her role as a specifically female citizen of England's Arcadian empire.

As an alternative to petal ships in a basin or the the paper tree of her imperial fantasy, Rhoda instead finds a more sympathetic and corresponding "reality" to inhabit in in the library—in a "a poem about a hedge" (40). Rhoda cannot or does not

explicitly identify poem she finds, nor is it particularly important to her who the author may be, yet the poetic space she finds and into which she strays is a clear adaptation of Percy Bysshe Shelley's "The Question."[75] Borrowing her diction directly from the poem, Rhoda enters into the space of its nearly perfect classical pastoral imaginary:

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[75] I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
Faint oxlips; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets—
Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth—
Its mother's face with Heaven's collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured may,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white,
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it!—Oh! to whom?

I will wander down it and pick flowers, green cowbind and the moonlight coloured may, wild roses and ivy serpentine. I will clasp them in my hands and lay them on the desk's shiny surface. I will sit by the river's trembling edge and look at the water-lilies, broad and bright, which lit the oak that overhung the hedge with moonlight beams of their own watery light. I will pick flowers; I will bind flowers in one garland and clasp and present them—Oh! to whom? (39-40)

Not only does the poem furnish Rhoda with a local habitation for her nascent pastoral longings, the fecund delight she experiences in the pastoral imaginary and echoing cadences of Shelley's lyric blurs the boundaries between her present moment in the library and the virtual space of the poem, itself. [76] The visionary flowers she gathers in one she imagines bringing to the other as they might be laid on the desk in front of her, posing, however fleetingly, a potential fusion of, rather than a continued vacillation between, two different worlds.

Rhoda's occupation of the lyric space of Shelley's poem unleashes a corresponding corporeal awakening that mimes the ice of winter giving way to the rush of spring:

Now my body thaws; I am unsealed, I am incandescent. Now the stream pours

[76] I'm having a hard time figuring out how to qualify this space itself. It's so similar to Sterne's "Sweet pliability of spirit!" in SJ in which he wanders through Elysium and has imaginative intercourse with Dido's sorrow. Transport—>entering into the poetic space itself as a kind of virtual experience. "The Question" more than likely from 1904 ed. S*helley Complete Poetical Works*, Or Leigh Hunt's *Companion for the Lover of Nature and Art* (1820) Question is a adaptation of Dante's Divine Comedy, Purgatorio, Canto 28; the poem's imagery returns late in *The Waves* as Rhoda climbs the hill in Spain where she can see Africa; moment in which she seems to both anticipate and to narrate her own death p. 151 "Who then comes with me? Flowers only, the cowbird and the moonlight coloured may…**We** launch out now over the precipice" (151)

> in a deep tide fertilising, opening the shut, forcing the tight-folded, flooding free. To whom shall I give all that now flows through me, from my warm porous body? I will gather my flowers and present them—Oh! to whom?" (40)

The pastoral resources of Shelley's poem provide an abundance of libidinal and creative energies in which and by which Rhoda might not only locate herself, but also imagine herself in relation to others. But this unbound and (pro)creative eros finds no *single* appropriate object for its rush of affections. Just as in Shelley's poem, the poetic speaker, overcome with the vital bounty of the bouquet, brims with the anticipation of giving, yet arrives back at the poem's origination, perhaps waking from a dream, and finds no recipient for it, Rhoda's incandescent liquidity instead finds this resolution: "I will give; I will enrich; I will return to the world this beauty. I will bind my flowers in one garland and advancing with my hand outstretched will present them—Oh! to whom?" (40). Rhoda's experience of and response to Shelley's lyric renders the unnamed and unknown object of its final verse, the no object of its ultimate question, as metaphor for the world. In the refiguration of the poem's final question, Rhoda commits herself to a practice of artistic creation, participating in the myth of sacrificial artist-hero by which the world is likewise renewed.[77]

The complex deictics of Rhoda's characterization, and its address to a

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[77] The lament for Daphnis in Theocritius's first Idyll provides a fine example for this, as does Milton's *Lycidas.* See also Patricia Cramer's "Jane Harrison and Lesbian Plots: The Absent Lover in Virginia Woolf's 'The Waves' " for a reading of Rhoda's 'sacrifice' in comic mode on based on Greek fertility rituals identified and studied by Jane Ellen Harrison.

sustained pastoral mythos, place her in relation to a larger poetic tradition. The doubleness of her procreative and erotic energies evoke the 'incandescence' of Shakespeare's androgynous mind to which Woolf refers in *A Room of One's Own* while others have tracked the allusive resonances of Woolf's Shelleyean tenor in *The Waves* through not only "The Question," but also his "Indian Serenade," "Adonais," "Epsichydion," and "Ode to the West Wind."[78] Clustering around Rhoda, the novel's references to Shelley contribute to an ethos, borrowed from the poet, of disruptive and radical social energies. Allusions to Shelley's lyric encourage comparisons between Rhoda as an "uncompromising and ultimately suicidal visionary" (McGavran, 60), and a Shelley who appeared in Woolf's own project of patriarchal resistance as a spirit Nathaniel Brown has characterized as "seeking a perfection beyond the bounds of the possible" (184).

Scholarship calls ample attention to the appearance of Shelley's lyric and reputation in *The Waves*; yet his *Defence of Poetry* remains a largely unexplored and unnamed text in both Woolf's novel and factors heavily in what Małgorzata Myk calls the "precarious potentiality" of Rhoda's figuration. (110) [79] The resonances of Shelley's essay in Woolf's novel (and, moreover, the notion that Shelley's ambivalent

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[78] Certainly in the novels, see *Voyage Out, Mrs. Dalloway, Orlando*, et al… and in *The Waves* but exerts influence elsewhere in Woolf's writing particularly through a her Platonism as shown in *Sketch of the Past.*

[79] Associations of Shelley's lyrics with a form of patriarchal resistance for Woolf are particularly poignant given Leslie Stephen's opinions on Shelley as evidenced by *Hours in a Library:* Stephen found Shelley to have "a terrible affinity for the race of crotchet-mongers, the people who believe that the world is to be saved out of hand by vegetarianism, or female suffrage, or representation of minorities, the one-sided, one-ideaed, shrill-voiced and irrepressible revolutionist.

classicism in relation to his ideals of social revolution and democratic liberty might provide a useful model for some of Woolf's own political and poetic ambivalences) deserves more consideration that I have space for here, but for the purpose of Rhoda's characterization as poet-figure and visionary I'd like to point out that in its famous assertion that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," Shelley's *Defence* makes a claim for poets as privileged agents of cultural production, a cycle or circle that Rhoda finds herself suspended outside of but attempts repeatedly to break into through her occupations of poetic space. Shelley associated the robust culture-making capacity of poetry with " an imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man"—an axiom which speaks to Rhoda's fascination with her empress dream as more than a rote monarchical fantasy of autonomy or an attempt to escape from subjectivization, but rather places it in relation to her desire for a different kind of legislative authority. Additionally, Shelley's assertion in *The Defense* that Plato, in particular, "sought to kindle a harmony in thoughts divested of shape and action," provides a vocational rationale for Rhoda's own imaginative activity in relation and in response to existing social convention. Moreover, in his *Defence* Shelley relies on the procreative dynamism of natural imagery to elaborate his treatment of poetry as a divine discourse at "the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life". In many ways, Shelley's *Defence* provides the necessary link between Rhoda's ecstatic potentiality,

idiosyncratic Platonism, and poetic dedication to renewal by grounding them all in the organic metaphors and natural idealism of Shelley's own onto-poetic imagination.

Finally, Shelley associated the bucolic poems of Theocritus to have a moral effect on the cruel and cold citizens of empire—and the bucolic poets, their verses, however circumscribed by the sensibility of their auditors, to have supplied the world with a necessary beauty participant in a larger diachronic enterprise. With these considerations in mind, Rhoda's flowers (like the "imprisoned children of the hours" of Shelley's "The Question") stand not just as an oblique metaphor for female or lesbian sexual experience but signify as a bid for an improved ontological possibility organized through pastoral means. Rhoda's gathered garlands respond to Shelley's description of the poet as one who stands in a potent relationship to time, nature, and creation— a powerful temporal relation to the possible:

> For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. (513)

In Rhoda's raptures, ineffability and ecstatic contemplation the possibility of a world constituted through poetic means is open to her. Here, she has access to a dream of not being constituted through the pastoral and its associations with patriarchy and empire but in actively constituting a world as a poet might, an act that stands in relation to the

pastoral as a privileged metaphor for cultural and artistic production in the novel.[80] Rhoda apprehends the significance of this power late in the novel as she stands on a precipice, recollecting the means by which community is constituted through aesthetic experience and artistic production: "Then in some hall I parted the boughs of music and saw the house we have made; the square upon the oblong. 'The house which contains us all'" (150). If we read the aforementioned Shelleyan sensibilities associated with Rhoda's characterization as a search for poetic spaces, not simply as escape from an inhospitable reality (although the search itself may certainly may be necessitated by such antinomies) but as an effort to the actualize a poetic vision of possible worlds, then her suicide, and more particularly Rhoda's narrative strategies in relation to her own suicide, and her entanglement with the figure of Percival becomes more than an act of resistance through rejection or silence. Rather, we can see them as part of a struggle to engage and occupy pastoral terrain, to claim space in a genre that Shelley lauded as "episodes to that great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world" (522).

In his attempt to "sum up" at the end of the novel, Bernard revisits various locales of his youth as a catalyst to memory: "I went to the Strand, and evoked to serve as opposite to myself the figure of Rhoda always so furtive, always with fear in her eyes, always seeking some pillar in the desert, to find which she had gone; she had

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[80] "All the authors of revolutions in opinion are not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical, and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal music." Shelley's *Defense*, see also Woolf "We are the words, we are the music…"

killed herself" (208). While Bernard's narration is the first and most explicit statement of Rhoda's fate, Louis earlier intimates her suicide as he meditates on her absence, and in two of Rhoda's own soliloquies, one just following Percival's death on the banks of the Thames, and one high in the hills of Spain where Rhoda can "see Africa" (149). Rather than dramatize the moment of Rhoda's death, her disappearance from the novel's pages is, instead, prefigured in Rhoda's own narration and commemorated in both Louis's memory and, posthumously, in Bernard's final speech. In the memories of both Louis and Bernard, Rhoda's death and absence becomes inextricably linked to that of Percival's. Nearing the end of the novel, Louis will reflect on these losses as two sides of a pastoral coin:

> Percival was flowering with green leaves and was laid in the earth with all his branches still sighing in the summer wind. Rhoda, with whom I shared silence when the others spoke, she who hung back and turned aside when the herd assembled and galloped with orderly, sleek backs over the rich pastures, has gone now like the desert heat. (148)

Louis's recollection fuses Percival with the pastoral metaphor of the flowering tree like a structuring presence, while distinguishing Rhoda, in her departure from the herd, as an animal, one that resisted the pastoral subjectivization evidenced by her peers. Yet both Percival's constitution at the novel's core through the centrality of his pastoral metaphor and Rhoda's deviance from it remain linked together. Bernard echoes this linkage as he meditates in simplified and paratactic utterances on the absurd proximity of life and death attempting to differentiate between collective and individual being:

"We sat here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead" (214).

The twin losses of Percival and Rhoda constitute the elegiac core of a novel that both seeks consolation and denies it by way of its cultural critique. As he is the one who assumes to speak for the others in the last extended soliloquy of the novel, critical readings tend to focus on Bernard's ultimate role as poet and elegist, making him the obvious candidate for poetic speaker participant in larger tradition of world-making. [81] While all characters register Percival's death in their own ways, exploring the imprint of his absence on their private lives, Rhoda also seeks to commemorate Percival's life through a process of ritual and remembering that blurs the distinction between public and private memorial. In so doing, she participates in the larger tradition of pastoral elegiac forms not as an object but as speaker—an act that can be read as acting on the structure of pastoral, itself. Given her association with Percival—the inextricability of their fates both in her mind and in the memories of others—the poetics of pastoral ceremony in which she participates might be read as both elegy and epithalamium, further giving Rhoda access to two ceremonial forms that Celeste Schenk claims "chronicle her [the female singer's] coming to distinctive poetic voice."[82] A reading that traces Rhoda's participation in elegiac and epithalamic forms through the conventions of pastoral ceremony, offers a way, other than through

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[81] See also Erin Penner, et al.

[82] "The case of epithalamium, a genre formally, ideologically, thematically daunting to the female practitioner precisely because its conventional grammar calls for a bride-object offers a chronology of the women poet's gradual access to ceremonial forms: her response to the genre is, in short, the history of her literary 'appearance', the chronicle of her coming to distinctive poetic voice." (*DeColonizing Tradition*, "Corinna Sings", 38)

Rhoda's silence, for Woolf to shift the poetics of *The Waves* toward a feminist vision.

VIII. Violets in the Crucible

When Percival, the novel's absent center and cultural hero, is thrown from his horse and dies in India, Rhoda makes a pilgrimage through London to scatter violets for him over the Thames at Greenwich. In the wake of Percival's death and moving at first through Oxford Street shops, Rhoda narrates a reconfigured world through a lexicon of classical pastoral remnants: "The figure that was robed in beauty is now clothed in ruin. The figure that stood in the grove where the steep backed hills come down falls in ruin…I will look at oaks cracked asunder and red where the flowering branch has fallen" (115).[83] Rhoda expresses the terms of Percival's death in language that echoes and reshapes Louis's own depiction of the flowering tree with branches still "sighing in the summer wind" (148). She rescripts his elegiac tenor, however, to include both the sudden violation of its organicity and also the suggestion that Percival's death has more than loss to offer: "…lighting has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen, and Percival by his death has made me this gift, let me see the thing" (118). In Rhoda's narration, the event of Percival's death, the stroke of lightning that downs the flowering tree, signifies as knowledge that interrupts its otherwise pastoral metaphor, emerging paradoxically as both loss and gift.[84] Through Rhoda's consciousness, the advent of Percival's death becomes amplified as an anti-

[83] Annette Oxindine further links these images to the holograph version of the *The Waves* in which Rhoda demonstrates a deeper and more prolonged identification with Artemis, strengthening her ties to a classical iconography that functions as code for lesbian desire.

[84] Much like the lighting strike in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or the "blasted pine" of Tennyson's *Princess.*

pastoral allegory for contemporary culture; she walks down Oxford Street "envisaging a world rent by lightning" that reveals to her "…hate, jealousy, hurry, and indifference frothed into the wild semblance of life" and the "hideousness" of the human face (115-116). For Rhoda, Percival's death discloses a vulgar material heaviness driven by commerce and underpinned by existential dread. Yet, she observes this degeneracy and decay in a vivid language of shared experience decidedly at odds with her customary patterns of social terror and poetic flight:

> I should be hung with other people like a joint of meat among other joints of meat…we cluster like maggots on the back of something that will carry us on. …we settle down, like walruses stranded on rocks, like heavy bodies incapable of waddling to the sea…We lie gorged with food, torpid in the heat…(117)

The prospects of intersubjectivity so abhorrent to Rhoda in her youth might appear grotesque, but as a consequence of Percival's death, she no longer holds herself apart or recoils from it but rather enters into the "we" of a shared social experience. In her willingness to entertain the experience of a public and social body, Rhoda goes to a music hall where she stands in a line to smell the sweat of other people, where she listens to a woman sing and witnesses the players as they move abstract forms around the stage, as they "take the square and place it upon the oblong" (118). In a novel that offers multiple models of elegiac consolation, Rhoda's day under the lightning's flash demonstrates her own formal and abstract understanding of aesthetic experience as remedy for a shared condition of a potentially irremediable grief. As successful

mourning requires some kind of substitution or compensation for our various losses. Rhoda finds these consolations in the music hall or in square on the oblong, which both suggest to her the solace of art and the continuity of the culture to which it speaks —of life and community constituted through the aesthetic.

Rhoda's ceremony of mourning takes place in the context of this movement from autotelic enclosure to demystified exposure, and as a transposition of pastoral wandering to urban terrain. She gathers violets to give to Percival from the city streets. As she does so, she continues to embrace the anti-pastoral revelations of Percival's death:

> I am alone in a hostile world. The human face is hideous. This is to my liking. I want publicity and violence and to be dashed like a stone on the rocks. I like factory chimneys and cranes and lorries. I like the passing of face and face and face, deformed, indifferent; I am sick of prettiness; I am sick of privacy. I ride rough waters and shall sink with no one to save me. (115)

In defiance of the vulnerability she once feared and the private and pristine classical worlds to which she retreated, Rhoda instead espouses the alienation and rote productivity of modern life. In contradistinction to the timeless world immune from change of her poetic imagination, her espousal of modern life with its ugliness anti-pastoral sensibilities proposes openness to contingency, time and the shock of modernity. In this industrial vision stripped of the conventional beauty and mythos of

the pastoral, Rhoda's response is equally violent.[85] She expresses an impulse toward elemental annihilation, to be "dashed like a stone on the rocks." This reverse anthropomorphic gesture (one that echoes Rhoda's previous identification with "the whiteness that sweeps the outermost rocks with foam") suggests finally a metamorphosis or countermovement whereby Rhoda's queer liminal vitality returns to earth or to the water, as a kind of renaturalization that is also a remythologizing of the pastoral.

This openness to the present moment, and consequent vocational renovation, reverberates in the anaphoric rhythms of Rhoda's dedication to Percival. As she throws her violets into the Thames, she recurs her utopian vision of pillars, swallows, and dark pools—bringing the ideal and eternal into the contingent present. In a movement strangely coextensive with Percival's imagined martial prowess she …:

> Now I will relinquish; now I will let loose. Now I will at last free the checked, the jerked back desire to be spent, to be consumed." We will gallop together over desert hills where the swallow dips her wings in dark pools and the pillars stand entire. Into the wave that dashes upon the shore, into the wave that flings its white foam to the uttermost corners of the earth I throw my violets, my offering to Percival. (119)

On one hand, Rhoda's recourse to the enteral and ideal suggests an attempt at solitary lyrical transcendence, a return to the habit of spiritual flight away from the gross

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[85] Language of the passage is curiously reminiscent of brutalism as an architectural style associated with social utopianism, fascism, impersonality.

physicality evoked by the shops on Oxford Street and her identification with the well-fed men in their interiors. “We will gallop together” might even further intertwine Rhoda’s autotelic fantasies with the exotic and imperial idiom attached to Percival, implicating her rapturous aestheticism with orientalist fables of empire. Dwelling on the strangeness of this entanglement, a better question might be why might Rhoda consecrate herself so fully in this moment to the very image that constitutes the repression of her own? Jane Marcus contends that the allusive networks Woolf utilizes in the *The Waves* work ironically and parodically to code Rhoda’s death according to heroic and poetic terms not normally available for the “alienated Western woman.” Marcus attempts to situate the terms of that death along lines suggested by Woolf’s appropriation of Shelley’s “Indian Serenade,” and by reading Rhoda’s death through the practice of sati, originating among the warrior aristocracy of the Indian subcontinent.[86] While nowhere explicitly referenced in *The Waves*, evidence exists that British Colonial officers attended satis as late as 1829 and ritual suicide in the colonies was well-known enough in England to be banned by Queen Victoria in 1861. Reference to a practice of ritual bridal suicide supplies one account of Rhoda’s elegiac memorialization of Percival and her own death in such a way as to link the fate of her inchoate subjectivity to the hyper-legibility of Percival’s. But it does so in the bleakest of terms, through a suicide imposed by oppressive patriarchal imperatives. Such a reading seeks its empowerment through a poetics of victimization and silence. The

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[86] Ritual suicide as a funereal practice: the self-immolation of women whose husbands have died.

better question then becomes, how else might Rhoda speak? While Percival's death enables Rhoda to apprehend and acknowledge the function of cultural consolation, as a specifically female-bodied artistic visionary who has spent much of her life outside dominant systems of signification, she also cannot fully participate in its common/shared structures in a way that does not unproblematically reproduce them. Serendipitously, for a reading that seeks to contextualize Woolf's feminist and anti-imperial politics in relation to pastoral poetics, as this one does, Rhoda's pastoral ceremony is sufficiently ironized its refusal of idyllic modulation and in its setting so as to constitute an appropriative act.

Etymologically, Greenwich means "green settlement." Moreover, at Greenwich, the site of Rhoda's pilgrimage and of Percival's elegiac memorial, stands the deep anchorage of the Royal Naval Academy, linking England to the peripheries of its empire by sea and by ship. The ships that Rhoda notes as she arrives in Greenwich to memorialize Percival's passing ("…I see masts among the chimneys; there is the river; there are ships that sailed to India" (119)) are the same ships that serve as the agents of imperial egress and return that, likewise, buttress and sustain London's economic and domestic prospects. Further tying the site of Rhoda's tribute to England's position as an imperial center, Greenwich is also the home of the Royal Observatory, an institution devoted to the regulation of mean solar time (a standard of measurement otherwise known "Universal Time") and whose temporal authority developed in tandem with Britain's development as a maritime nation and trade center. The ritual whereby Rhoda comes to commemorate the death of Percival as the

perceived apotheosis of English culture and pastoral flowering and to dedicate herself (to whom?) occurs at a site that both hosts and enshrines various regulatory resources and mechanisms of Western imperialism. The masts among the chimneys furnish a visual echo of the stalks in their childhood garden—and an apt environment in which to both resist and remythologize the pastoral.

In her approach to Greenwich, Rhoda focuses on the violets she's gathered but they are not the posies or poesies of pastoral convention; they are, rather refigured in the fallen language of the metropolis as plausible signs of degeneracy and decay: "This is my tribute to Percival; withered violets, blackened violets" (116). And yet, they are the gift she would like to give to Percival as recompense for his own gift. But what is being exchanged within the parameters of what Molly Hite has described as Rhoda's "modernist dirge"? In the Victorian lexicon of floriography purple violets were an expression of delicate love or modesty and chastity. In the epithalamia of Sappho 105c, the violet or purple flower of the mountain meadow is trampled by careless shepherds in a metaphor for lost chastity and sisterhood that in its address to nuptial ceremony is also elegiac in its tenor.[87] As fragile and early spring flowers, violets are associated with both untimely death and resurrection. In the novel, Woolf explicitly associated violets with death: as Louis observes "Death is woven in with the violets…Death and again death." (102)[88] Violets are thus overdetermined in the

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[87] Robin Hackett associates Rhoda's violets with sexual deviance and corruption (83); Rhoda's suicide, in its leap, is also decidedly Sapphic.

[88] Shelley evokes a field of flowers in imaging Keats burial place as preface to Adonais: "The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place. (SPP, 390)"

iconography of pastoral ceremony and as a symbol of ontological exchange. In her association with them, as the offering made to "Percival," they provide a metaphor for Rhoda herself—one that is further enriched by reference to Shelley's *Defence* in its imagining of the violet in a crucible as a figure for an untranslatable origin or essence:

> … it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its color and odor, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower—and this is the burden of the curse of Babel. (514)

For much of the novel, in her inchoate subjectivity and social illegibility Rhoda functions much like the violet cast into the crucible—untranslatable in essential qualities and submitted to the extreme pressures of subjectivization. In Shelley's analogy, the violet is destroyed by the severity of the crucible's demands to understand or explain it. What is ineffably "violet" is also grounded in its particular material instantiation. Likewise, the violet, is, for Rhoda, an emblem of utter immanence. She reads herself into the violets as a consequence of Percival's passing: "These then are the flowers that grow among the rough grasses of the field which the cows trample, wind-bitten, almost deformed, without fruit or blossom. These are what I bring…" (118). In her violets, and in her self, Rhoda identifies a figure of disjointed nature, either unable or refusing to participate in a naturalized cycle of reproduction, regeneration, or renewal. In the temporally and materially odd emblem of flowers without blossom, as buds stunted or not-yet-born the Sapphic intonations of Rhoda's pastoral ceremony reemerge against a sexually exploitative heteronormative order. In

this refusal to either reproduce or renew, Rhoda disidentifies with and queers the norms of pastoral inheritance; she ironizes her relationship to traditions of both elegy and epithalamium in such a way as also to suggest an escape from an exhausted form.[89] And yet the imperatives of renewal attached to Shelley's theory of poetic language—of a "springing again from its seed," also inhere in Rhoda's final dedication to Percival.

What constitutes her personal act of mourning in the novel, the scattering of Rhoda's "penny bunch of violets," may also be read as a public celebration of Percival's death and of the hero-myth for which he stands (119) . The "withered violets, blackened violets" of her tribute function simultaneously as an elegiac memorial and token of gratitude for the death of an outmoded cultural ideal that obscured the commonplace realities of London's metropolitan, imperial center. The violets thus mediate between nostalgic and modern modes of the pastoral. In bringing together past and future in the repeated "Now I will" of its dedication, Rhoda reprises the language of procreative power first harnessed by her reading of Shelley's "The Question"—to think of Rhoda's private elegiac memorial as simultaneously also public and future-oriented likewise shifts the possibilities of its dedication. The "we" that initially appears as a comorbid ontologic entanglement with Percival may reappear as the "we" of a larger community and social collective that shares Rhoda's

[89] Just as the violet in the crucible provides an icon for the inexpressible condition to which poetic language aspires, Rhoda's association and identification with the violets in her penny bunch suggests for her a poetic vocation tied to the ineffable. Shelley's *Defence* sublimates the violet; *The Wave*s sublimates Rhoda.

vision. Rhoda's projected motion over the desert hills and into the waves demonstrates an impulse "to follow where all is fled"—such that Rhoda's offering of violets might be coded ambivalently as suicide-ideation, poetic succession, or both.[90] The Shelleyean tenor of Rhoda's tribute suggests the ruin of empire and a will toward self-annihilation as part of the process of poetic renewal suggested by her reading of Shelley in her youth.[91] Percival's death and demystification of the pastoral ideal and its prettiness liberates Rhoda's deeply ironic understanding of cultural consolation. It is also the event that, through the cultural apparatus of pastoral elegy itself, authorizes her to speak of it. In the self-authorization of Rhoda's memorializing gesture, as well as in her subsequent death, likely by drowning, she becomes a candidate for poetic inheritance according to the conventional means of pastoral elegy by which the elegist takes the place of the dead poet by assuming poetry's song as consolation for the loss of the poet. Miriam Wallace gestures to this dynamic in some degree when she writes that Rhoda's elegiac gesture, its artistic form and enactment gives Rhoda ("overly located in the unspeakable imaginary") "access to symbolization" (301). By making Rhoda and the queer violets of her penny-bunch participant in a larger tradition of pastoral elegy, Woolf creates the space for Rhoda's illegible and fugitive female

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[90] Adonais: 52:4xx- and 53 : "…Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak."

[91] "a champion riding out against the forces of superstition and brutality with heroic courage" (Woolf re: Shelley) "rapt in his extraordinary vision, ascending…" (CE, 4). Woolf had more than a passing fascination with Shelley' the circumstances of death and the surrounding landscape.

subjectivity to figure as something other than an aporia or as silence—as a figure for poetry and poetic renewal under a reconfigured ethos.

In Bernard's final elegy, Rhoda enters into the expected symbolic order of mourning by becoming part of his public address. However, his account of her life and her inclusion in his elegiac lineage must also take into account the fact that in choosing the terms of her dedication and in the self-narration surrounding her suicide and memorialization, she's already elegized herself. Bernard must, then, imagine his own death according to hers: "I see far away, quivering like a gold thread, the pillar Rhoda saw, and feel the rush of the wind of her flight when she leapt" (214). This reverie, in its shared imagining of Rhoda's world, pushes us toward a transcendent moment— it is at least the exhilaration of a movement toward it—in envisioning its possibility. In the last lines of the novel, however, it is neither Rhoda nor Bernard who speak but the eponymous waves as they assail the borders of England's Arcadian empire, breaking on the shore. In their final echo and in Rhoda's her penny-bunch of violets "the neuraesthenia of the suffragette" finds a place in *The Waves*, afterall. What in McConnell's reading must be an inhuman nature defined *against* the pathetic fallacies and anthropomorphism of the pastoral is at the novel's close, a reverse movement—the sublimation of "a girl in this room" into violets and foam as part of a project of poetic renewal that expands the possibilities of pastoral as a cultural and social metaphor for the articulation of a more radical and prolix female subjectivity. In the writing and reception of *A Room Of One's Own*, Woolf worried about the prettiness of her language, in the decorative and lyrical qualities that would prevent

her from being taken seriously in a political or polemical sense; here she makes those lyrical forms precisely the vehicle of her critique. At the very least, attention to Rhoda as a pastoral speaker and to her participation in pastoral's re-mythology—reading her as part of the answering wave that crashes on the shore in the novel's final moments—keeps alive the possibility of a world, however with us, that might be rehabilitated or reconfigured through pastoral means.

CHAPTER 3

"SCARE THE NIGHTINGALES AND INCARNADINE THE WILLOWS": THE PERSISTENCE OF PASTORAL IN *THE YEARS* AND *THREE GUINEAS*

> 1st June 38
>
> Ethyl you're a trump. A heart of gold under a somewhat charming exterior. They will be overjoyed. And I've told them you might add a book or two… They're so cramped in there they have to choose which to house. I think it is almost the only satisfactory deposit for stray guineas, because half the readers are bookless at home, working all day, eager to know anything and everything, and a very nice room, with a fire even, and a chair or two, is provided. So you were, as usual, under your exterior, as wise as Goethe, and as good as gold…I will send you three guineas (the book only I mean) tomorrow. I hadn't meant to, as it only repeats The Years with facts to prove it, not fiction; as is a hurried piece of work—though it was hard work collecting the facts—and you won't like it or agree with it. So let's say no more about it.
>
> —Virginia Woolf to Ethyl Smyth

> 3 June 38
>
> "Your book is so splendid that it makes me hot."
>
> —Ethyl Smith to Virginia Woolf (L6:232)

In *The Waves,* Woolf commits to a fully saturated vision of England's Island Arcadia and the coming-of-age of its white cultural elite, charting the subjectivization of its speakers through a pastoral imaginary inextricable from a national one. In addressing the fundamental force of this poeisis Woolf explores the constraints and possibilities of pastoral as a vital agent in the making and unmaking of culture. In *A*

Room of One's Own pastoral appears as contested literary terrain that might be occupied in service of a feminist poetics; in *The Waves* it manifests an almost totalizing discursive power. In Rhoda's dreams and reveries, however, Woolf disidentifies with and queers the norms of pastoral inheritance traditionally determined by patriarchy and empire, opening up the possibilities of pastoral resignification. That Bernard adopts and shares Rhoda's recurring visions at the novel's close, likewise, suggests the importance of aesthetic contemplation not only to the authenticity of individual experience but to larger prospects of social and cultural renewal. *The Years* and *Three Guineas* together follow *The Waves* and the fate of Woolf's split pastoral vision into a wider social context as part of an emancipatory project whose aims include freedom, equality, and peace. The following chapter explores the role of pastoral in these texts as it shapes Woolf's ideas of individual liberty, historical process, and social transformation in relation to those aims.

I. Heroism of the Essay / Pleasure of the Novel

Although *The Years* was completed and published first, novel and essay share a complex genesis, rooted in more than just the proximity of their writing. Woolf first conceived of *Three Guineas* / *The Years* as early as 1931 as both belonging to a single project, a sequel to *A Room of One's Own* that might focus on the professional and sexual lives of women.[92] Novel and essay together were originally part of her experimental project *The Pargiters*—a centrifugal multigenerational family narrative

92 "I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book—a sequel to *A Room of One's Own*—about the sexual life of women: to be called Professions for Women perhaps—Lord how exciting! This sprang out of my paper to be read on Wednesday…" (D4:6) Woolf would later return to this entry to notate "Here and Now" (Black, 56)

that embodied Woolf's attempt to synthesize the "granite" of fact and the "rainbow" of fiction.[93] As a "novel-essay," *The Pargiters* was to alternate interpretative essays with chapters of fiction.[94] Bogged down by the lengthy and seemingly impossible process of reconciling two antagonistic truths, Woolf ultimately considered *The Pargiters* a failed enterprise. She divided granite from rainbow, publishing *The Years* in 1937 and *Three Guineas* in 1938. Both essay and novel were part of a sustained compositional process that involved concerted historical and cultural documentary effort, evident in the many scrap books containing newspaper clippings, research and photographs kept by Woolf for this purpose. Her commitment to historical and socio-cultural context undergirds both projects, resulting in a reflexive and complex rhetorical awareness of gender and class positioning in both novel and essay.

The overt consciousness of class and gender exhibited in both essay and novel rebels in degree against the position Woolf articulates in *A Room of One's Own* that sex consciousness and anger mar good writing. Woolf intimates concerns about didacticism in tone and intentions early in the inception of *The Pargiters*. In early drafts of her "Speech before the London / National Society for Women's Service" January 21, 1931—the talk which was to become "Professions for Women"—she links the spirit needed to radically overcome oppressive gender norms to a heroic enterprise

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93 "One one hand there is truth; on the other there is personality. And if we think of truth as something of granite-like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility…we shall admit the problem is a stiff one…" (149) "The New Biography" (1927) from *Granite and Rainbow*, Harcourt (1957).

94 *The Pargiters* / *TheYears* would also exist under a working title *Here and Now* and *The Open Door* c. 1934. For more on the composition and genesis of *The Pargiters* as antecedent text to both *Three Guineas* and *The Years* see *The Pargiters*: *The Novel-Essay portion of THE YEARS* edited by Mitchell A Leaska (1977)

antithetical to poetic imagination:

> the moment I become heroic, the moment I make that great effort which is required to overcome opposition, dart my imagination against an obstacle, I become—at least I think this is so—so conscious of my own heroism—and of opposition—that I wake up…and I become a preacher <more like a critic> not a writer….[95]

In the more finalized type script version of her speech she opines clearly and provocatively: "I doubt that a writer can be a hero. I doubt that a hero can be a writer." Woolf's own entanglement with social resentment and the desire to mitigate its echoes in her art may contribute in kind to why editor Mitchell Leaska in his reconstruction of the "novel-essay" incarnation of *The Years* determines "preaching [to] indeed cloud many of the novel's pages" (xvii) even as he lauds the project's feminist concern. Yet, a certain kind of aspirational heroism motivates the goal Woolf sets for the "career of a woman novelist" to "speak the truth about her body," as well as the proposition that "whether given a better environment the results might be such that women too can be artists lies on the laps of Gods, no not upon the laps of Gods, but upon your laps, upon the laps of professional women." (xxx) The foundation of a world in which women must both create the conditions of speaking the truth and, in turn, speak the truth itself is Promethean in its undertaking. An early draft of a typographic version of Woolf's speech begins by lauding the "necessary" heroism of composer and women's rights advocate Ethel Smyth:

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[95] (Leaska, xxxix)

> She is of the race of pioneers she is one of the ice breakers, the gun runners, the window smashers. The armored tanks, who climbed the rough ground, drew the enemies fire, and left behind a pathway—not yet smooth and medalled road—but still a pathway for those who come after her… I never know whether to be angry that such heroism was necessary or grateful that such heroism was shown (xxvii)

Woolf expresses Smyth's necessary heroism in the language of real world and violent action she would ordinarily impute to the public sphere and to the socialization and education of men. Yet, even as Woolf positions her own work in opposition to, or as lacking, this kind of heroism, she subtly inflects the terms of it as she recounts her own battle with the Angel in the House, the epitome of Victorian womanhood, in order to claim the priority of her own interests and voice as a woman writing.

Woolf's explicit disavowal of "heroism" correlates with what Alex Zwerdling characterizes as her "instinctive pacifism"—a lifelong devotion that for her was "article of faith rather than a discretionary tactic" (274). Woolf, often and always suspicious of institutions, organizations, and committees, never officially joined ranks as a patron of many popular antiwar peace collectives; Bloomsbury's own collection of conscientious objectors and its vehement opposition to the senseless barbarity of first world war, jingoistic patriotism, and militarism all together, however, significantly grounds her writing and pacifist convictions. Still, in the time between the cessation of WWI and the beginning of WWII even the cohesiveness of Bloomsbury's antiwar and anti-nationalist sentiments would fragment and shift in the

face of the fascist threat that many of her male colleagues in Bloomsbury, including Clive Bell and EM Forester, saw as antithetical to English freedom and liberty. The looming totalitarian and fascist threat of WWII, brought about in part by the Allies' post-war failure to rise above nationalist psychology and to propose reasonable terms for German reintegration, challenged Bloomsbury's decades long devotion to a more cosmopolitan vision of western civilization built on "the free civilized individual… internationalism, [and a] critique of the violence within" (9). Woolf's kaleidoscopic intention of this interwar period, a project that would "take in everything, sex, education, life" (D4:129) —the attempt to claim for women a delimited expression of ontological experience—fits into the trajectory and tensions of an interwar Bloomsbury increasingly pulled between moral imperatives of pacifism and heroic resistance.[96] While Woolf places the god-like responsibility of creating the conditions possible for women to have enough social and economic power to do so on the laps of a class of "professional women" from whom she exempts herself, the suggestion of a similar heroism, evident in Woof's famous edict "Thinking is my fighting," characterizes her struggle to murder the oppressive specter of womanly consolation that props up the patriarchal order in order to speak and write the truth. In many ways, *The Pargiters*, with its juxtaposition of historical fact and multi-generational family fiction, was to provide an essential alternation between two modes of necessary truth-telling—one aligned with the heroic or epic struggle of naming sexual oppression and

[96] For more comprehensive overview of Bloomsbury's interwar ethos and its modernist context see Christine Froula's *Virginia Woolf and The Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* (2005)

overcoming it in "real world" fashion with the hard granite of fact and critical interpretation, and the other aligned with the pastoral promise of literary generation aligned with the imagination, a literary art that might also, through aesthetic pleasure, organize both sociability and community.

To pull the resultant projects of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* apart in such a definite and contrasting fashion is to also intimate that the fact of one and the fiction of the other—the heroism of the essay and the artistic pleasure of the novel—are also separate. Yet, both works are an extension of a question grounded in concepts of sexual difference that takes as its object emancipatory prospects for women and, subsequently, men as they are connected to a larger progressive social vision of peace and prosperity that finds its deepest roots, however problematically, in Woolf's pastoral utopianism. Even as Woolf is said to have divided out rainbow and granite from *The Pargiters* to make *The Years* and *Three Guineas* cohere as separate projects, they remain connected by an absence, addition, and recurrence of pastoral figurations as part of their representational economy. In their contours and fissures we can trace deep tensions between the heroism of a world-shaping poetic imagination and Woolf's own pacifist misgivings that writing could or ought to be a heroic enterprise. This chapter further interrogates the use Woolf makes of pastoral as a vehicle for radical social renewal, paradoxically tied, as it is, both to the oppressive patriarchal institutions reviled by her and the Shellyean imperatives and possibilities of poetic legislation embraced by her.

II. Pastoral Prepositions / Historical Consciousness

In following the lives of three generations of Pargiters over the course of multiple decades, *The Years* is held together by moments of pastoral contextualization in which the animating poetry of the landscape is charged with the social vitality of its corresponding zeitgeist. The 1880 segment that opens the novel showcases Woolf's kaleidoscopic vision as it moves from the wider seasonal landscape to the prolix avenues of city life and the people in them. The hum of London's urban core is organized by the pomp and circumstance of commercial exchange and hemmed in at the margins by a ghostly pastoral song that calls attention to itself as a confusion of cultural and natural causes:

> It was an uncertain spring. The weather, perpetually changing, sent clouds of blue and purple flying over the land. In the country farmers, looking at the fields, were apprehensive; in London umbrellas were opened and then shut by people looking up at the sky. But in April such weather was to be expected. Thousands of shop assistants made that remark as they handed over neat parcels to ladies in flounced dresses standing on the there side of the counter at Whitley's and the Army and Navy Stores. Interminable processions of shoppers in the West end, of business men in the East, paraded the pavements like caravans perpetually marching,—so it seemed to those who had any reason to pause, say, to post a letter, or at a club window in Piccadilly. The stream of landaus, victorias, and handsome cabs was incessant; for the season was beginning. In the quieter streets musicians doled out their frail and for the most part melancholic pipe of sound, which was echoed, or parodied, here in

> the trees of Hyde Park, here in St. James by the twitter of sparrows and the sudden outburst of the amorous but intermittent thrush. The pigeons in the squares shuffled in the tree tops, letting fall a twig or two, and crooned over and over the the lullaby that was always interrupted. The gates at the Marble Arch and Apsley House were blocked in the afternoon by ladies in many colored dresses wearing bustles, and by gentlemen in frock coats carrying canes, wearing carnations. Here came the Princess, and as she passed hats were lifted. In the basement of the long avenues of the residential quarters servant girls in cap and apron prepared tea. Deviously ascending from the basement, the silver teapot was placed on the table, and virgins and spinsters with hands that had stanched the sores of Bermondsey and Hoxton carefully measured out one, two, three, four teaspoons of tea. When the sun went down a million gaslights, shaped like the eyes in peacock's feathers, opened their glass cages, but nevertheless broad stretches of darkness were left on the pavement. The mixed light of the lamps and the setting sun was reflected equally in the placid waters of the Round Pond and the Serpentine…At length the moon rose and its polished coin, though obscured now and then by wisps of cloud, shone out with serenity, with severity, or perhaps with complete indifference. Slowly wheeling, like the rays of a searchlight, the days, the weeks, the years passed one after another across the sky. (3-4)

This opening passage suggests, initially at least, an unpredictable natural world circumscribed by social predictability, custom, and conventions—among them

interrelations of trade, class stratification, and gender identity. As the scene moves to take in the public rituals of a royal parade and the private rituals of the Victorian household, the softly singing pigeons, in their lullaby and in their habitual haunts, seek to establish a domesticated consolation that, in its consistent interruption, must be repeated endlessly. The passage's ensuing movement into the confines of the upper-class Victorian household from the city streets similarly juxtaposes the Royal Princess, as an enshrined and revered figurehead of ceremonial femininity, with the serving class of women who labor in the basements enabling the household's private ceremony of tea service, a ritual that, in turn, encodes a set of gender norms and expectations for upper-class women. The devoted "virgins and spinsters," defined both by their age and sexual status, are themselves dedicated to the care of the poor and unfortunate in the slums of the city, as they allocate the foreign commodity at the heart of British domestic civility into the prepared silver teapot with mechanical certainty. The equivalencies of sunlight and lamplight, of illumination and darkness, as well as the leveling of temporal markers like days, weeks, and years, and the indeterminable pathos of the moonlight communicate the late stages of mid-Victorian stasis swept into an overwhelming ambivalence about to change.

In *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf,* Jane Goldman characterizes Woolf's pastoral poetics in *The Years* as part "political satire" that "includes a self-conscious meta-narrative on how imperialist politics affects pastoral aesthetics, opening up the question of the relationship between the representation of the political and the politics of representation" (82). As an effort to highlight the importance of

textual self-consciousness in Woolf's deployment of pastoral motifs in *The Years* as one belonging to a non-realist narrative strategy that is also political in its aims, this makes sense. However, it is less clear here than even in *The Waves*, that the overwhelming tenor of Woolf's pastoral poetics is fully satirical or parodic in kind. For every structural critique of pastoral's institutional sympathies and conservative values by Woolf, there emerge, alongside and within the larger pastoral frameworks deployed by her in *The Years,* moments of individual aesthetic experience, fully realized and self-consciously understood through the pastoral mode, that speak to a more progressive vision of social liberation—a vision Woolf lays out in *Three Guineas* as one of "freedom, equality, and peace." Lyric passages reminiscent of *The Waves* do open each new historical section of the novel. Unlike the interchapters of *The Waves*, however, they are less methodical in their temporal employment, neither are they set apart from the text by their typography nor by any insistence of poetic allegoresis of a "natural" world mapped on to human agency and culture-making. They move freely from the weather to human industry, from the blowing of seasonal winds to the scratching of pens on ruled pages and the outdoor burning of weeds, from people in trains to those in their gardens and back again. In this sense, they are perhaps less obviously "pastoral" than prepositional: that is, in their social inflection and focus, they provide the disparate characters of Woolf's centrifugal family narrative with connected places in space and time. In this imposed relationality, perhaps, one even might locate an attempt to overcome the proposed solipsism of *The Waves*. If Woolf's original intention was to address her writing of this period to the professional and

sexual lives of women, she follows through on her intention by playing close attention to the women of the Pargiter family as they navigate changing historical circumstances attempting to carve out for themselves identities independent of patrimonial affiliations in both their public and private lives. The possibilities for this autonomy occur in relation to the changing currents of history proposed progressively by the pastoral preludes and in moments of pastoral experience inscribed within the lives of separate family members. The involvement of Woolf's pastoral poetics in a process of radical cultural change exceeds the role Goldman might assign to them, as primarily satirical in character. Rather, Woolf's pastoral vision in *The Years* operates in tandem with her historical consciousness, a process Goldman likewise describes as a "rupture…contained in the flux of social cohesion" (80) —a phrase this chapter ties to "rapture" in said flux.[97]

The ambitions of Woolf's dilatory narrative method and her desire to chart a course toward radical social renewal plays itself out in the trajectories of the novel's many characters. Eleanor, the dutiful daughter of Colonel Pargiter, family patriarch, devotes most of her life to being a surrogate caretaker to her siblings and to her father upon the illness and death of her mother; she never marries, however, finding a late freedom in her spinsterhood that she never could have enjoyed as a wife and mother. Eleanor's tomboy sister Rose is a militant suffragist whose activism leads her, in turn, to jail time and to wartime patriotism. Kitty Malone, Eleanor's cousin on her mother's side and daughter of an Oxford Don, feels trapped by the prospects of living a life like

[97] Jeri Johnson, likewise, characterizes the historical nature of the novel as one of "flux." (xxvi)

her mother's, finds a provisional freedom in marrying Lord Lasswade, enjoying a freedom afforded to her by class status and money and, finally, in her widowhood after thirty years of being a wife and mother. Maggie Pargiter, her younger cousin on her father's side, finds a "different kind of marriage" with the Frenchman René. Maggie's eccentric sister Sally who likewise never marries, finds poverty and freedom in equal measure as a professional writer and in her longterm friendship/partnership with the homosexual Nicholas, and Eleanor's niece Peggy whose training and education have secured for her the profession of doctor. Yet, the men of the Pargiter family are an integral part of this progression, both as impediment to and allies in the possibility of women's autonomy. In mapping the generational shifts in Pargiter men: Colonel Pargiter—a superannuated imperialist patriarch, Morris—the eldest Pargiter sibling and barrister, Edward—the Oxford scholar, Martin—ex-soldier and investor, and North—just home from and aspiring writer, Woolf adheres to a "feminism," for lack of a better word, that binds to the fate of men and women both.

Woolf's embrace of the dual liberation of both sexes is evident in *A Room of One's Own* as she develops the "looking glass vision" that locked men and women into hierarchical gender relations toxic to both and is recapitulated over a decade later in her correspondence. In 1929, she had written:

> Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size… that serves to explain in part the necessity that women so often are to men. And it serves to explain how restless they are under her criticism; how impossible it

> is for her to say to them this book is bad, this picture is feeble, or whatever it may be, without giving far more pain and rousing far more anger than a man would do who gave the same criticism. For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished…The looking-glass vision is of supreme importance because it charges the vitality; it stimulates the nervous system. Take it away and man may die, like the drug fiend deprived of his cocaine.….” (*A Room of One's Own*)

In a 1940 letter she writes to Lady Shena Simon: "Can one change sex characteristics? How far is the women's movement a remarkable experiment in that transformation? Mustn't our next task be the emancipation of man?" (L6:379). Woolf's insistence on an encompassing sexual freedom that would enable both men and women to "live differently" and the attempt to document its individual progressions and constraints characterizes the novel's most prominent pastoral moments. While the pastoral preludes offer a mode of contextualization for a shared historical consciousness, some of the clearest possibilities of individuated freedom for both sexes appear as transcendent moments that lift away from the larger historical narrative inscribing themselves within a pastoral register outside of the daily routine and outside of time. These moments, which present themselves as rapture or reverie, become available through larger existing pastoral frameworks Woolf associates with patriarchal and imperialist culture; however, within these larger frameworks, subject as they are to an implicit critique of sex and class in their articulation, we find also these utopian instants aligned with absolute personal freedom. That these moments themselves

speak to the possibility of social renewal justifies not only Woolf's refusal to abandon the form, but the intensity of her commitment to it in her pursuit of an emancipatory vision.

III. Town and Country / Reverie and Counterforce

The 1914 section of the *The Years*, structured as a two-fold dialectical journey between urban and natural landscapes, presents two versions of pastoral experience, understood as moments of individual reverie or sublimity that efface contours of social self each existing within a larger pastoral framework determined by both class and gender. The first centers on the consciousness and reverie of Martin Pargiter as he wanders through central London, meets with his cousins Sally and Maggie and walks through Hyde Park and into Kensington Gardens. The second tracks his other cousin, Kitty, as she travels from her Grosvenor Square townhouse to the Lasswade family country estate. At the outset of the chapter, Martin moves freely through the city unexpectedly running into Sally on the steps outside of St. Paul's cathedral. After taking her to lunch, he accompanies her through Hyde Park and to Kensington Garden to meet with her sister Maggie and her infant child. As Martin moves through the city he fastidiously tracks the time, marshaling Sally through the streets with a likewise compulsively patronizing attitude. As he enters into the green enclosures of the park, however, and closer to his encounter with Maggie and her babe, he becomes liberated, even if momentarily, from his overtly patriarchal conditioning, suggesting at least the possibility of freedom from a stultifying inheritance of British masculinity. The middle section of the chapter is bridged by Martin's passage out of the woods and straight into

the heart of London's high society as he attends his cousin Kitty Malone's (now Lady Lasswade) social event in Grosvenor Square. If the first portion of the chapter demonstrates the unflattering effects of Martin's patriarchal upbringing, this middle section generates pathos for him as he moves through the fringes of Kitty's party, encountering the painfully awkward limits of his masculine social capital in both age and class. As the chapter segues from its focus on Martin to Kitty, Woolf introduces a second pastoral journey that moves from central London out into the countryside and the acreage of her husband's rural estate. In this final movement, the 1914 chapter tracks the social constraints of Lady Lasswade's position as society hostess and her conditioned responsibilities to other people and their progressive unraveling as Kitty moves further out of the city and away from people. In the chapter's final moments, Kitty experiences a present moment of utter freedom and bliss in her rural solitude. In Kitty's transit from enforced sociability to a self-sovereignty experienced through the medium of the country house's pastoral abundance to the dissolution of self, Woolf narrates a shifting experience of time in relation to the utopian possibilities of social erasure. The double structure of the 1914 chapter demonstrates Woolf's commitment to and the limits of pastoral as a utopian mode while also suggesting that the terms and conditions of an imagined freedom have social determinations.

Martin begins his journey at home, about to visit his stockbroker, assured of both the world and his place in it. He's confident in both his social position and in the money he's both made and inherited. The sights and sounds of the city—women in summer dresses, the organ music in the streets, people eating lunch in their kitchens—

please him, assuring him of a plentiful world in which “Everybody seemed to have money to spend” (213). In this mood, he arrives at St. Paul’s:

> The OMNIBUSES swirled and circled in a perpetual current round the steps of St. Paul’s. The statue of Queen Anne seems to preside over the chaos and to supply it with a centre, like the hub of a wheel. It seemed as if the white lady ruled the traffic with her scepter; directed the activities of the little men in bowler hats and round coats; of the women carrying attaché cases; of the vans, the lorries and the motor omnibuses. Now and then single figures broke off from the rest and went up the steps into the church. The doors of the Cathedral kept opening and shutting. Now and again a blast of faint organ music was blown out into the air. The pigeons waddled; the sparrows fluttered. Soon after midday a little old man carrying a paper bag took up his station half-way up the steps and proceeded to feed the birds. He held out a slice of bread. His lips moved. He seemed to be wheeling and coaxing them. Soon he was haloed by a circle of fluttering wings. Sparrows perched on his head and his hands. Pigeons waddled close to his feet. A little crowd gathered to watch him feeding the sparrows. He tossed his bread round him in a circle. Then there was a ripple in the air. The great clock, all the clocks of the city, seemed to be gathering their forces together; they seemed to be whirring a preliminary warning. Then the stroke struck. “One” blared out. All the sparrows fluttered into the air; even the pigeons were frightened; some of them made a little flight around the head of Queen Anne. (214-215)

Jeri Johnson reads this moment as one in which the "regal power" of Queen Anne, regulating the flow of daily business, "gives way before the greater charisma arising from the humbler occupation of St. Francis" (xxxii). Indeed, the passage holds a place in the narrative between Martin Pargiter's observation that one must "need some pluck…to write 'God is Love' on the gates of Apsley House when at any moment a policeman might nab you" (214) and his emergence out in the cathedral grounds where he feels uplifted by the architecture, yet annoyed and buffeted by the crush of humanity in the square. The comparative tension between the perpetual circle of traffic ruled over by Anne's sceptered sway and the halo of wings surrounding the old man freely distributing bread for the birds and his crowd of admirers on the cathedral steps suggests an action that "might draw society together not through political domination…but through charitable action…" (xxxii). As a moment of free indirect discourse positioned between Martin's narrative focalization, the passage suggests a consciousness less impeded by convention and judgement, yet one that must be inevitably folded back into the narrative, interrupted by its historical moment. According to Johnson "this utopian possibility breaks apart with the striking of the clocks as actual time and contemporary history intrude upon this brief vision of an alternative social formation" (xxxiii). Even as "contemporary history" interrupts the possibility of a more communal understanding, Martin, as he moves through his day, will both repeatedly ask his cousin Sally to converse on "politics; religion; morality" and likewise interrupt her when the honesty and idiosyncrasy of her replies make him uneasy in public (231). The conversational dynamic and indeed the gendered dynamic

of the afternoon in which Martin even tries to control how Sally crosses a street replays the force of historical interruption allied with a patriarchal world-view into an otherwise utopian metaphor increasingly aligned with both feminine and pastoral sensibilities.

As Sally and Martin enter Hyde Park en route to meet Maggie, they pass the Speaker's Corner where multiple orators vie for their attention. Of the clamorous speakers, the text lingers with three of them—two men and one old woman. Where the men command larger crowds and declaim on clear socio-political issues of ethnic identity, justice and liberty ("joostice and liberty") and the redistribution of wealth, the old woman occupies a more marginal position, speaks in a voice scarcely to be heard, and addresses a much smaller crowd: "The old lady's audience was extremely small. Her voice was barely audible. She held a little book in her hand and she was saying something about sparrows. But her voice tapered off into a frail thin pipe. A chorus of little boys imitated her" (227-228). Here, the text consolidates and echoes the terms of the cathedral square and of Martin and Sally's day together in more overt, however ironic, pastoral register. In the "frail thin pipe" of the old woman's voice, in the obsolescence of her concern for sparrows, and even in the quaint manner of her "little book," Martin's narration asserts both the triviality and tragedy of the female voice who essays to make her wisdom heard "above the catcall and whistles" and in so doing becomes an object of ridicule and parody by school boys (229). Exceedingly conscious of the time, Martin pulls Sally away from the speakers, as he shepherds her toward her own scheduled meeting with her sister: "Come along, Sal," he said, putting

his hand on her shoulder (228).

Yet moving from Hyde Park into Kensington Gardens, where they will rendezvous with Maggie and her baby, Martin continues into a cultivated natural space defined by increasingly feminine sensibilities that beguile him, offering a temporary respite from both his time consciousness and his egotistical preoccupation. As they enter the garden gates a lady eating an ice catches his eye "as if she were caught in a net of light; as if she were composed of lozenges and floating colours." (229) The language here, with its "net of light," recalls Jinny's libidinal energies in *The Waves*, and yet instead of the reification of heteronormative relationships through sexual desire, the moment of pleasure leads Martin into a state of rapture that begins to dissolve the boundaries and singularities of the ego-driven self he reflexively compares to one of the male orators in the park:

> …What would the world be, he said to himself—he was still thinking of the fat man brandishing his arm—without 'I' in it? He lit the match. He looked at the flame that had become almost invisible in the sun. He stood for a second drawing at his pipe. Sara had walked on. She too was netted with floating lights from between the leaves. A primal innocence seemed to brood over the scene. The birds made a fitful sweet chirping in the branches; the roar of London encircled the open space in a ring of distant but complete sound. The pink and white chestnut blossoms rode up and down as the branches moved in the breeze. The sun dappling the leaves gave everything a curious look of insubstantiality as if it were broken into separate points of light. He too,

himself seemed dispersed. His mind for a moment was a blank. Then he roused himself, threw away his match, and caught Sally.

‘Come along!’ he said ‘Come along…The Round Pond at four!’ (229)

In abandoning, however momentarily, both his time-consciousness and ego-driven masculine self-hood in this moment of aesthetic contemplation, Martin experiences not a retroactive pastoral "longing after innocence and happiness,” as Renato Poggioli might describe it, but the fleeting blankness of self-dispersal tied to the tantalizing possibility of a larger communal understanding. In the prospect of a world “without ‘I’ in it” Martin experiences the scene of pastoral’s aesthetic delights neither ironically nor as an unrecoverable state of lost innocence understood through an elegiac mode. Martin may understand the ontological possibility latent in the present moment through a topos governed by its pastoral aesthetic, but this understanding is anticipatory in its orientation. Rather than providing the telos of pastoral experience in the origin which is also the end, the “primal innocence” pervading the park enables Martin’s freedom from compulsions of masculine agency and tends toward a not-yet but possible being.

As aesthetic experience, Martin’s reverie is governed by a conspiracy of natural and feminine beauty, of “nature” understood through the constructedness of the pastoral and, as the rest of his walk with Sally bears out, by the idealized figure of feminine beauty first offered up by his subconscious identification with the lady sipping her ice (“Martin half-thought that he knew her” [229]) who begins his reverie and the figure of maternal consolation that ends it. Martin’s temporal urgency and his

patriarchal propriety terminate in the figure offered by Maggie and her sleeping baby under the tree:

> She too was dappled with lozenges of light…She held up her hand as if to warn them to approach quietly…As they reached her, the distant sound of a clock striking was wafted on the breeze. One, two, three, four, it struck…Then it ceased. (230)

Signifying both event and arrival, the ceasing of the clock opens up the possibility of a contented "now" — a magical hour within the narrative structure of the chapter that enfolds an exploration of sociable understanding between sexes. Martin's meeting with Maggie under the tree largely dissolves the fussy persona of masculine judgment and patriarchal command he performs with Sally. Free of both this social conditioning and the mechanized internal demand of the clock, he demonstrates both honesty and vulnerability as he converses with Maggie about love, marriage, and the constraints of a life organized around heteronormative commitments. As they do so, images from the cathedral square and Speaker's Corner replay themselves within a protected and sanctified pastoral circumference. A woman nearby feeds the birds which swoop in a circle around her head like sparrows around the statue of Queen Anne..Sally lays down in the grass and falls asleep:

> Instead of taking the little hard green chair which he had pulled up for her, she had thrown herself down on the grass. She had folded herself like a grasshopper with her back against the tree. The prayer-book, with its red and gold leaves, was lying on the ground tented over with trembling blades of

grass. (231)

Sally ignores the conventional and civilized suggestion of the chair supplied by Martin, favoring a whole-hearted rustic abandonment of propriety. In doing so, both she and her book (grasshopper and leaves) become absorbed into the landscape, part of its natural enclosure, an inducement to dreaming that liberates Martin's restraint: "The baby was asleep; Sara was asleep; the presence of the two sleepers seemed to enclose them in a circle of privacy…Everything was once more in its place… Everything was full of the stir, the potency, the fecundity of spring…" (232). Within this protected circle, Maggie and Martin easily and conversationally test the limits of conventional marriage, discussing not only Martin's difficulties with possessiveness and commitment in the present, but also the secrets and infidelities of their parents' generation with acceptance and equanimity. He tells her of his father's mistress. They contemplate the possibility of an affair between Martin's father and Maggie's mother " 'Was he in love," Martin asked her,'with your mother?…'Are we brother and sister?' she asked; and laughed out loud. (234) In addressing family infidelities and confused paternity, Martin evidences a flexible and frank understanding of traditional marriage and its shortcomings. In the openness of their exchange, under the tree and among the sleepers, Maggie and Martin gesture to a superannuation of the Victorian household and to a more progressive understanding between men and women. Much like the possibility of alternative social formation presents itself in the circle of sparrows in the cathedral square, the possibility of community organized around an honest assessment of the sexual lives of both men and women, however fleetingly, suggests itself. The

suspended circle is broken as Maggie laughs and the baby awakes and time reasserts itself: "The child cried; and the clocks began striking." (234) Martin will leave the sisters in the park, as he is propelled onward (like the white rabbit always late) to Kitty's evening party. As he travels away from his sojourn in the green world and reenters society, the wash of urban images obliterates the moment of reorganized *communitas* under the tree—"He was thinking that he had forgotten something but what, he did not know" (235)—effectively, containing the possibilities and lessons of the greenwood.

As Martin moves from the cathedral steps to the green enclosures and magic circles of Kensington Garden, pastoral offers a progressively feminized variety of liberation—a possible reprieve from the fussy and oppressive masculinity dictated by patriarchal conditioning. But where Martin finds his pastoral retreat in the company of his female cousins in the park, for the women of the Pargiter family the demands of male attention and requirements of socialization offer no such respite. Sally, at turns exasperated, resigned, and contented in her own imaginative world endures Martin's fussiness with well-worn fortitude. Maggie, in turn, fulfills her role as confidant and madonna under the tree admirably. For Kitty Lasswade, daughter of an Oxford don and married to an aristocrat, the ontological freedom offered by a pastoral fantasy presents itself in an ever elusive and scarce solitude enabled by her journey away from central London and her social obligations. Despite being the hostess of the London gathering in her Grosvenor Square home to which Martin hurries, Kitty demonstrates unease with both her opulent surroundings and gendered norms of hospitality and

feminine grace. Martin notes that she stands “a little stiff always” (236); the women call her ‘The Grenadier’ behind her back for her abruptness of movement (244); Kitty characterizes the conversational atmosphere of the women as insubstantial and trivial “battledore and shuttlecock” (245); separated from the men, and among the women of the drawing room, Kitty loses no time in throwing open the window to look at shade dappled sidewalks, belying her mounting claustrophobia and impatience with the indoor gathering. (244) A neat objective correlative for Kitty’s gendered alienation offers itself in the anti-pastoral emblem of a potted plant situated just inside the ladies’s drawing room:

> “They paused for a moment to look at a tree that was covered with pink blossoms in a china tub standing at the door. Some of the flowers were fully out; others were still unopened. As they looked a petal dropped.
>
> “It’s cruel to keep it here,” said Kitty ‘in this hot air.” (242)

Like Martin, Kitty also tracks time throughout her portion of the narrative; as she repeatedly glances at the clock, she is counting down to a moment of liberation—fixating on the departure of her guests when she will be able to catch the train out of the city. [(246, 250. 253, 254, 255)] At pains, over the course of the novel to demonstrate the restless nature of men who seek women out of the male desire for a sympathetic female auditor or a surface in which to see their own magnified reflections—as Colonel Pargiter does with his mistress Mira (her name, an apt concretization of Woolf’s looking-glass vision) or with Eugenie, the sister-in-law he so admires—or as Martin replays in his own meeting with Maggie under the tree—Woolf

makes explicit the relief and joy Kitty anticipates in shifting from an urban world of enforced sociality into the solitude and open promise of the countryside: “All the tension went out of her body. She was alone; and the train was moving.” (255) Importantly, the text sutures together Kitty’s embodied presence with the gathering force of the train and its momentum away from the station.

Here, Woolf lingers once again with the chapter’s image of the circle as a metaphor for the organization of temporal and social energies. As Kitty flees the city and its overwhelming sociality, the city flares up in a ring of illumination that she and the train must break through in an act of severance from the social body. In its metaphysical resonances, her transit from city to country reads as death and rebirth, signifying a new ontological presence in which Kitty becomes increasingly available to herself and for herself, perpetually in relation to the ever-expanding countryside:

> “They were leaving London behind them; leaving that blaze of light which seemed, as the train rushed into darkness, to contract itself into one fiery circle. The train rushed with a roar through a tunnel. It seems to perform an act of amputation; now she was cut off from the circle of light. She looked round the narrow little compartment which was isolated. Everything shook slightly. there was a perpetual faint vibration. She seems to be passing from one world to another; this was the moment of transition. She sat still for a moment; then undressed and paused with her hand on the blind. The train had got into its stride now; it was rushing at full speed through the country. A few distant lights twinkled here and there. Black clumps of trees stood in the grey summer fields;

> the fields were full of summer grasses. The light from the engine lit up a quiet group of cows; and a hedge of hawthorn. They were in open country now." (256)

Emerging from the tunnel into the rural landscape, Kitty experiences not only a reorientation of her vital energies, but a significant temporal reorientation, as well. As she travels through the countryside, Kitty begins to shift from time experienced as a regulatory mechanism, an emplotted series of appointments and obligations, to one much more fluid and open it its unfolding. As she no longer keeps pace with the hands of the clock in their circumference, as one might do within the circle of London, but instead synchronizes with the train as it bears her further out into the countryside, time becomes legible to Kitty as a force of creative and destructive capacities. Kitty's subsequent experience of time becomes metaphysical in its engagement. Within this liminal space, Kitty questions more freely the strictures of London's enforced sociality and her participation in it: "She saw herself raise the window with a jerk; and the bristles on Aunt Warburton's chin. She saw the women rising and the men filing in… All the clothes are the same, she thought; all their lives are the same. And which is right? she thought…Which is wrong?" (257) As she restlessly questions the conditions of her own social positioning without resolution, Kitty finds respite in the mindfulness of the present moment—in a series of re-presenting "now"s—that suspends thoughts of both past and future, calming and soothing her into sleep:

> The train rushed her on. The sound had deepened; it had become a continuous roar…She turned away from the light. *Now* where are we, she said to herself.

> Where is the train at this moment? *Now*, she murmured, shutting her eyes, we are passing the white house on the hill; *now* we are going through the tunnel; *now* we are crossing the bridge over the river… (257)

Kitty's journey away from London, while orienting her more fully in a present moment that liberates her, at least temporarily from social obligation, is also a liberation deeply nostalgic in its articulation and circumscribed both by old money and conservative class values. It takes as its setting the country house and estate, a site that, as Raymond Williams points out in *The City and The Country,* displays "the gentle exercise of a power that was elsewhere, on their own evidence, mean and brutal" (29).[98] As Kitty arrives in the countryside and into the waiting care of the driver who swill convey her the rest of the way to her husband's estate in their new motor car, it's like she's stepped back in time. In contrast to the chapters' opening moments of London business and industry, and their emphasis on the excitement of the social season, the text now tarries with idyllic descriptions of the natural landscape, of women scrubbing steps, and the rattling of milk carts. Time moves more slowly here, even the season is taking its time. In London it may be high season but in the north, it is still the beginnings of spring, a latency and slowness marked more fully by the novelty and speed of Kitty's motor car. And yet, the motor car (a gift from Kitty's husband) does not disrupt the unfolding idyll; rather, it becomes naturalized as part of a pastoral fantasy enabled by wealth and class privilege: "The road stretched

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[98] Likewise, the country house is a seam where one might locate tension between stasis and novelty ["an idea of rural society against the pressures of a new age." (28)] between labor and leisure classes, between moral and aesthetic judgements.

pearl white in front of them; the hedges were decked with the little pointed leaves of early spring" (258). The landscape seen from the motor car may pass by more quickly than it used to, but speed does little to diminish the growing lyrical consciousness the often anti-poetical Kitty expresses as she journeys closer to her pastoral retreat: "Now the woods were on their right hand and the air came singing through them. It was like the dark sea, Kitty thought, looking as they passed, down a dark drive patched with yellow sunlight" (259).

Indeed, the closer Kitty comes to the family estate, the more amplified the terms of her pastoral idyll become. Passing into the grounds of "The Castle" (through a gateway branded with their initials and a family crest that hangs over the doorways of cottages and inns) and into the house, Kitty fully inhabits the promised splendor and leisure encoded in the rural family estate and its surrounding land:

> The green light dazzled her as she went in. It was as if as he stood in the hollow of an emerald. All was green outside. The statues of grey French ladies stood on the terrace, holding their baskets; but the baskets were empty. In summer flowers would burn there. Green turf fell down in wide swathes between clipped yews; dipped to the river; and then rose again to the hill that was crested with woods. There was a curl of mist on the woods now—the light mist of early morning. As she gazed a bee buzzed in her ear; she thought she heard the murmur of the river over the stones; pigeons crooned in the tree tops. It was the voice of early morning, the voice of summer. But the door opened. Here was breakfast. (260-261)

In bringing together the green qualities of the light outside and the green turf as it falls away to the river, Woolf positions Kitty at the center of an opulent class fantasy in which the current plentitude of nature and its anticipated abundance conspire with the largess of aristocratic living. In the "the hollow of the emerald" Kitty's breakfast is laid out for her in the morning room with no sign of the labor or human agency that may have placed it there. Her pet chow wanders in, admitted by an "invisible hand" (261) breakfast appears of its own accord. In the gorgeous slowness and leisurely expectation of an entire day to herself (in the possibility of a time that opens up without limit as Bataille might have it),[99] Kitty is less like a tree dying in the confines of a Grosvenor Square drawing room, and more like the butterfly decoratively framed in her window as it alights on the garden plants and consumes sunlight:

> The whole day was hers. It was fine too. The sunlight suddenly quickened in the room, and laid a broad bar of light across the floor. The sun was on the flowers outside. A tortoise-shell butterfly flaunted across the window; she saw it settle on a leaf, and there it sat, opening its wings and shutting them opening and shutting them, as if it feasted on sunlight. The down was soft rust-red on its wings. Off it flaunted again." (261)

In the minute details of the quickening sunlight and down on the butterfly's wings, Woolf places the aesthetic pleasure of an enlivened sensory imagination

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[99] See Bataille, "Let us say that the sovereign (or the sovereign life) begins when, with the necessities ensured, the possibility of life opens up without limit." (198)

alongside the quotidian comforts of breakfast, and the company of her dog with Kitty the beneficiary of an environment that almost *but not quite* parodically generates leisure and abundance. Woolf's commitments to pastoral experience within the country house setting are "parodic" in that they draw on the conventions of country house poems like Jonson's "To Penshurst" in which a Golden Age vision of natural abundance mystifies the labor contributions of its tenants in service of an epideixis of "naturalized" class hierarchy. For Williams, the pastoral topos of "To Penshurst" celebrates the happy mutuality of this class arrangement, even as its fictionalization vis a vis the pastoral draws attention both the fiction and its necessity. In the dual motion that both acknowledges the labor contributions of Kitty's extensive network of servants and subsequently effaces them, Woolf implicitly acknowledges that such a sleight of hand is likewise necessary for Kitty's pastoral experience. As William's further points out "mystification…requires effort" (31). Woolf is both aware of the explosive labor systems of the invisible hand and quite intentionally hides in plain sight the labor contributions that are essential to Kitty's pastoral experience. The understanding that such a sleight of hand is necessary for Kitty's pastoral experience exists alongside, for Woolf, the absolute authenticity of the experience itself. If the larger pastoral apparatus of the chapter suggests a larger indictment of pastoral aesthetics, within its more utopian moments Woolf inscribes their rehabilitation.

When Kitty "stretche[d]s her hand for a cigarette" she finds it immediately in box enameled in blue and green, an act that for a moment recalls her to the class tension between herself and her Pargiter cousins—"What would Martin say, she

wondered…Hideous? Vulgar? Possibly—but what did it matter what people said? Criticism seemed light as smoke this morning" (261). The moment in which Kitty reaches for a cigarette and it provides itself to her out of the richness of an enameled box and the momentary pang of conscience that asserts itself in the guise of her disapproving male cousin dramatizes the complexities of Kitty's pastoral fantasy in its gendered and economic aspects. Even as the beautifully appointed property spontaneously offers up her creature comforts, the disapproving image of Martin offers the opportunity for Kitty, as she luxuriates in the pleasures of smoking, to demonstrate self-sovereignty in defiance of her male relatives. As a narrative device, Kitty's cigarette elaborates a motif of aristocratic privilege and gendered defiance that weaves itself in deftly with the landscape outside—the ephemeral sting of class critique, insubstantial as smoke, burnt off like morning mist on the crest of the green hill.[100]

The last segment of the 1914 chapter explores the possibilities and limits of Kitty's sovereignty in a largely recognizable classical pastoral structure suggested by topographical and country house poems. As Kitty wanders and climbs through the landscape, the pastoral structure rendered by Woolf frames the problem of pastoral as one of simultaneous enfranchisement and alienation. When Kitty emerges after

[100] This moment emerges as one not just of female autonomy but aesthetic autonomy, which depends on a break with or suspension of ethical and political critique: "But if the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of the thing, but how we judge it in mere contemplation…. If someone asks me whether I find the palace that I see before me beautiful, I may well say I don't like that sort of thing, which is made merely to be gaped at. . . . in Rousseauesque style I might even vilify the vanity of the great who waste the sweat of the people on such superfluous things….but that is not what is at stake here. One only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me…." (Kant, Critique of Judgment, 1.2.)

breakfast for a walk that will take her to the top of the hill, and the apotheosis of the chapter's pastoral sensibilities, she is alone save for the company of her chow. As she walks along the terrace of the manor house, Kitty sustains her detailed observations of the natural environment and her deep pleasure in it. In language that subtly contextualizes the property's pastoral setting in a lexicon familiar to medieval class structures, she observes: "The birds were singing in their scattered way. The starlings in their bright mail were feeding on the grass. Dew shone, red, violet, gold on the trembling tips of the grass blades. It was a perfect May morning." (262) The heraldic resonances in the "bright mail" of the starlings and in the richly hued dew on the grass replay the terms of the estate's ownership evident in the initials engraved on its gates, the family emblems that fly over the local inns and cottages, and even the hill that finds itself "crested with woods." The windows reveal rooms "stately" and seemly in their proportions; the library houses long rows of books that exist in self-sufficient silence and dignity. As she moves further out into the landscape, Kitty stops to reflect on the "The Castle" in its latent phenomenal glory: "asleep this morning, with the blinds drawn, and no flag on the flagstaff. Very noble it looked, ancient and enduring." (262) Flying no pennant (and with no summer flowers yet burning in the baskets of the French statues on the terrace) the Castle provides the figure of a deceptively benign and slumbering monolith whose fixity and endurance provides an inherently complicated backdrop to Kitty's presence.

As wife of Lord Lasswade, Kitty is clearly the mistress of the estate and the beneficiary of all its privileges and entertainments. Kitty, never scholarly in her

inclinations, who neither knows Mallarmé nor can recognize a pastoral lyric in polite conversation to save her life, knows the names of all the charted paths in the woods and the sounds the river makes in its various seasons as it comes down through the moors. In her capacity to love and know the land, Kitty shows herself to be a natural heir and steward of the great house and its surrounding green hills. And yet, as she turns into the woods, the terms of her enfranchisement and belonging turn quickly into wistful alienation. As laws of inheritance and custom will prevent Kitty from taking possession of the estate upon her husband's death, she understands her presence, in relation to the enduring stone manor house and its patriarchal provenance, as temporary and fleeting. Poignant and elegiac in its tenor, the last passage of Kitty's pastoral sojourn nevertheless glories in a triumphant ecstasy—in a fully lyric moment that lifts away from the narrative, seemingly to escape both law and social custom:

> The wind seemed to rise as she walked under the trees. It sang in their tops, but it was silent beneath. The dead leaves cracked underfoot; among them sprang up the pale spring flowers, the loveliest of the year—blue flowers and white flowers, trembling on cushions of green moss. Spring was sad always she thought; it brought back memories. All passes, all changes she thought, as she climbed up the little path between the trees. Nothing of this belonged to her; her son would inherit; his wife would walk here after her. She broke off a twig; she picked a flower and put it to her lips. But she was in the prime of life; she was vigorous. She strode on. The ground rose sharply; her muscles felt strong and flexible as she pressed her thick-soled shoes to the ground. She threw

> away her flower. The trees thinned as she strode higher and higher. Suddenly she saw the sky between two striped tree trunks extraordinarily blue. She came out on the top. The wind ceased; the country spread wide all around her. Her body seemed to shrink, her eyes to widen. She threw herself on the ground, and looked over the billowing land that went rising and falling, away and away, until somewhere far off it reached the sea. Uncultivated, uninhabited, existing by itself, for itself, without towns or houses it looked from this height. Dark wedges of shadow, bright breadths of light lay side by side. Then, as she watched, light moved and dark moved; light and shadows went traveling over the hills and over the valleys. A deep murmur sang in her ears—the land itself, singing, to itself, a chord, alone. She lay there listening. She was happy, completely. Time had ceased. (263)

On one hand, Kitty's reverie corresponds to pastoral in its most conservative and conventional aspects; it is nostalgic and escapist, and does not strenuously contest the class structures and patriarchal provenance that enable it. The homophonic correspondence between *Lasswade* and *lassitude* is unmistakable. Kitty may note what it feels like to love what she must leave ere long, but for the majority of her journey from London to the north country, the text relishes the unfolding details of the arcadian spring and her largely normalized position as the recipient of its aesthetic pleasures.

In this sense, Woolf demonstrates that the pastoral freedoms and the aesthetic autonomy they encode experienced by Martin Pargiter and Lady Lasswade both are

contingent on the social structures that permit them: Martin's by his own financial freedom and by his entitled claim on his female cousins attention, and Kitty's by the class structure that positions her as the sole beneficiary of an entire labor economy—from the butler who moves the party along so that Kitty will not miss her train to the maid who waits to dress her for her journey, to the chauffeur who conveys her quickly to the train station in her motorcar, and the conductor who holds the train for her, and the driver on the receiving end who takes her finally out to the country estate, not to mention the invisible hands that commits to the serving of her breakfast and care of the grounds themselves. In both cases, pastoral as a class fantasy offers to each the possibility of transcendence—of something just beyond their quotidian and socially bound selves. For Martin that liberation is hinted at by the momentary desire to escape paradigms of societally conditioned male egoism, and while for Kitty the solitude and expansiveness of Lord Lasswade's country estate offers a similar, if intensified, diminution of self as it relates to the larger landscape. Indeed, the lengths to which Kitty must go, from the sheer distance she must travel to the type of marriage she must choose and the class starts she must maintain, to fully experience the transcendent promise of this pastoral "liberty" emphasizes the material difficulties, conceived of by Woolf, of such freedom for women, in particular.

Deeply satisfying in its final iteration, Kitty's experience of the landscape at the top of the hill corroborates an experience that escapes both gendered social custom and embodiment all together. While her "thick-soled shoes" and mid-life vigor propel her to a vista at the top of the hill, the end-goal of Kitty's journey is the feeling of utter

freedom from material and historical circumstance through an aesthetic experience of the sublime. Bound to and enabled by the material conditions of the larger pastoral framework, the ecstatic liberty Kitty experiences at the top of the hill can exist neither as an unqualified endorsement of aesthetic experience nor, given the intensity and abandonment with which the text commits to said ecstatic liberty, as an ideology critique of aesthetic freedom. Breaking out of the trees onto the hill top, the boundaries of both body and private property dissolve as her body "shrinks" and her eyes "widen" to take in an expanded world erased of human habitation. Like Sally (and Orlando before her), Kitty, too throws herself onto the ground in an abandonment of cultivated propriety signaling an important shift in material and perceptual conditions.[101] In so doing, she expresses the return to a more elemental state that will bring her closer to the oceanic bliss of a land that likewise "billows" like waves and whose boundaries merge with the sea. The panoramic shift in scale subordinates human interest and agency in the landscape; simultaneously, the land "uncultivated, uninhabited, existing by itself, for itself" suggests an intimate connection between the landscape and Kitty's body now unconstrained by social obligation or convention. By extension, such an alliance, proposes also, a more primordial pre-gendered consciousness—neither male nor female in its being. In a plausible evocation of Genesis, the movement of apportioned "dark wedges" and "light breadths" participate in a vision of equivalent and complementary opposing forces, while the land itself

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[101] See also *Orlando* "I am nature's bride…" or "I have found a green laurel than the bay." Also Ann Martin.

sings, in an Orphic register that might be alpha or omega, beginning or end. In the dissolution of the social-self that is both beginning and ending, Kitty experiences a suspended moment of utter bliss. In Kitty's sympathetic communion with a landscape "singing, to itself, a chord, alone" Woolf offers the utopian possibility of self-authorization existing outside of time and unbound by place that suggests a passage *through* but ultimately *out* of pastoral and into the sublime.

Despite the conditional nature and sometimes ironic perception of pastoral liberties proposed by the 1914 chapter, in the shift of consciousness Martin experiences within the Kensington Gardens, and in particular in the overwhelming transcendent bliss Kitty apprehends in the chapter's final moments, Woolf offers, under the auspices of pastoral experience, the possibility of reconfigured ontological understandings. Yet, the text simultaneously places the possibilities realized in aesthetic contemplation in tension with material and historical circumstances that constrain their actualization. These constraints appear sometimes as jarring narrative contrast—for example, the fullness and utter peace of Kitty's pastoral bliss is followed immediately by the 1917 chapter which pitches the Pargiters straight into the events of WWI and the German strategic bombing of London. At others, they appear as a kind of ideological subversion that undercuts the promise of pastoral experience by implicating pastoral convention in forms of cultural subjectivization and gendered oppression much like she does in *The Waves*. In a deleted scene from late in the novel, Edward, walking with Kitty in the park, reflects on the difference between his current perceptions of her and the way he had loved her in his youth: "He had once thought

her a nymph, a shepherdess—yes. He watched her shouting to her dog…He was glad on the whole that he had not married her. She was too rough, too abrupt." (Appendix, 378). Kitty, in turn, momentarily fears that Edward, despite their advanced ages, will renew those same affections she had once refused. In using the ironized pastoral ideal to frame Edward's youthful idealization of Kitty, Woolf spotlights the stultifying effects of his old affections on both of them. The long unpublished holograph version of Woolf's manuscript (an intermediary version between *The Pargiters* and *The Years*) contains a scene in which Maggie, Rose, and Elvira (Sara in *The Years*) discuss birth control. Elvira refers to a scene of sexual violation in which "Maggie…or I for that matter…lying asleep one day on a hill top, fail to see the fellow crouched under the olive trees but sure enough he seizes [sees us and snatches] us in his arms"(xix). In sounding out the repressive social conditioning that makes honest conversation about sex difficult, even among women of the same family, Elvira resorts to the pastoral euphemism to describe rape to the older and more outwardly conservative Rose, who blushes when the women discuss sex despite being a militant suffragist, herself. In this brief exchange pastoral appears not as a liminal space for potential liberation but as a readily available topos for sexual exploitation. Such moments—moments in which pastoral appears in its most oppressively patriarchal guises, or even as nascent utopian moments circumscribed by a larger cultural apparatus —demonstrate both Woolf's commitment to pastoral as a vehicle for a more progressive understanding of being in the world, but also the sheer difficulty she encounters in unproblematically appropriating its poetic force, in seeing that poetic force actualized. Martin Pargiter

forgets the possibilities suggested by his utopian reverie as he leaves the Park and its dreamlike circumference. The telos of Kitty's pastoral journey is an encounter with obliterating forces of the sublime. They are, as Elisha Cohn has suggested, in her own study of reverie in the Victorian novels of Bronte, Eliott, Meredith and Hardy rather, "non-developmental" lyric intervals that remain suspended within the narrative, appearing without larger renovating virtues.

IV. Pastoral Propositions / Social Renovations

When *The Years* ends in "The Present Day" after five decades with the Pargiters, the surviving members of the reunited clan spill out into the city street after a celebration that has lasted the entire night. In narrating the moment just before other party-goers arrive onto the quiet city street Woolf writes: "A breeze ran through the square. In the stillness they could hear the branches rustle as they rose slightly, and fell, and shook a wave of green light through the air. Then the door burst open…" (412) As an augury of incipient change, this green wave gives way to a final hopeful vision, in which Eleanor observes a young man and a young woman in a traveling suit emerge from a cab and enter a nearby house together, and, as she does so Eleanor turns back to her own brother, Morris, with her own hands outstretched. The scene reprises a nearly identical moment in *A Room of One's Own* wherein Woolf similarly resolves issues of gender antagonism with a visual image of symmetry, is, at last, presided over by an approving cosmos: "The SUN had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity, and peace." (411) While satisfying in its ultimate tricolon and even approximating the quiet catharsis one feels

after a really good party, the last moments of the novel provide a false note of completion that papers over the otherwise complex and often ambiguous incertitude of its other pastoral figurations. In the metaleptic movement from Eleanor's consciousness to the unifying vision of the SUN's sweep, this lyric moment, which finally escapes individual suspension to become socially constituted, posits a reductive and fragile vision of peace in its own pastoralization of the gathering's prolix social and historical energies.

If we compare the novel's inaugural and final prepositional moments, the beginning of the "1880" chapter with the ending of "The Present Day," it is less clear that in these final lines Woolf offers any kind of ironic ambiguity on which to hang a reading of *The Years* and its pastoral aesthetics as political satire. While Goldman convinces in her provision that the moon of the opening passage in its figuration as money ("its polished coin") and in the characterization of time which wheels "like the rays of a sinister factory or military light" (80) implicates representations of the natural world in metaphors of warfare and commerce—and moreover that these poetic resonances may in turn affect how one reads the ensuing scene of old Colonel Pargiter as he sits in his exclusive gentleman's club, for example— a more poignant recognition of these metaphors' significance occurs in the novel's relationship to the more polemical *Three Guineas*. Goldman recognizes this relationship in that she relates the moon-coin of the opening moments of *The Years* to the moon Woolf likewise describes as a "white sixpence" in *Three Guineas*, but stops short of a fuller account of how these two phenomena might provide the political critique she claims

for Woolf's pastoral aesthetics in *The Years.* In fact, it may true that such a critique is not readily available in an independent reading of *The Years*, itself. For while *The Years* teases the possibilities of "living differently" in relation to historical change or in a self-sovereignty that might be arrived at through the pleasures of pastoral experience while simultaneously showing how those possibilities are circumscribed by the culture that enables them, it seldom does so with any definitive passion or vitriol. Early scholarly accounts of the novel, perhaps promoted by Woolf's own characterization of it as "a failure" and by a New Critical search for artistic balance and "unity," tell the story of a novel hobbled by the elision, abstraction and removal of its overtly political content. Grace Radin, for example, in her study of Woolf's multilayered revisions, characterizes the long compositional process of *The Years* as one in which Woolf's "original intentions lost their force." (xvii). In *Three Guineas*, however, the polished moon-coin of *The Years's* opening passage is clearly defined in its relation to women's autonomy and in Woolf's condemnation of a patriarchal stranglehold on culture whose violent impulses not only contributed to the oppression of women at home, but sustained imperial politics and violent conflict abroad. The moon of *Three Guineas* is not the figure by which one comes to a new ontological understanding but rather a natural phenomenon that is reconfigured in light of a radical political and powerful creative consciousness. In *Three Guineas*, the moon becomes reconstituted in Woolf's political imagination through the Sex Disqualification Act of 1919 which removed the legal barrier to women in the professions in the United Kingdom:

> "In every purse there was, or might be, one bright new sixpence in whose light every thought, every sight, every action looked different…The moon even, scarred as it is in fact with forgotten craters, seemed to her a white sixpence, a chaste sixpence, an altar upon which she vowed never to side with the servile, the signers-on, since it was hers to do what she liked with—the sacred sixpence that she had earned with her own hands." (14)

In the recurrence of the moon's figuration tied to the political necessity of economic freedom the possibility of a heroic and world-shaping pastoral imagination asserts itself. It does so not only as sign of economic independence from patriarchal influence, but as a differentiation of aesthetic sensibilities that, for Woolf, announces an epistemic break with the past. Between the moon "scarred as it is" and the "chaste sixpence" Woolf inscribes her drive for radical social renewal as an aesthetic transformation tied to both a new epistemology and social reform. In adducing epistemological stakes to this re-configuration of private aesthetic sensibilities in relation to shifting political terrain, Woolf also floats the possibility of a new or counter-public sphere under the sign of pastoral renovation.[102]

As *The Years* exhibits tensions between larger pastoral frameworks that Woolf associates with patriarchal influence and the private utopian moments that they enable, it likewise seems to propose largely unreconcilable tensions between between pastoral in its public considerations and the private pastoral of aesthetic experience. However,

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[102] See also Neil Saccamano "The Consolations of Ambivalence: Habermas and the Public Sphere"

insofar as the aesthetic experiences situated within larger pastoral frameworks in *The Years* resist assimilation to cultural utility or usefulness, they stage their own resistance to the instrumentality of a public life Woolf saw as deeply allied with the interests of both patriarchy and capitalism. Woolf's insistence in *The Years* on the separation between a public pastoral and a private one enacts a desire to prevent pastoral's private moments of liberation, of reverie and non-being, from becoming assimilated by dominant cultural forces that might reinscribe it as ideology. This perhaps, in part, accounts for the false-feeling of the novel's ending in which the "green wave" of Eleanor's indirect interior monologue becomes absorbed by the larger prepositional consensus of the "SUN's" scope.

Yet, for Woolf, it is precisely the role played by the aesthetic as a mediating force between public and private experience and, importantly, for the purposes of this inquiry, understood through its manifestation as pastoral, that is crucial in ushering in an understanding of the political that might embrace Woolf's own vision of liberty, equality, and peace. As Anna Snaith points out, while Virginia Stephen was raised in a climate of evolving liberalism based on a division between public and private life, the articulation of her feminism and pacifism in 1930s relies on the continuity of the two spheres (13). As we will see, despite the insistent separateness these individual pastoral moments within the states of aesthetic absorption implied by private pastoral experience, in *The Years* remain the seeds of a progressive social vision with potential

to transform the public sphere.[103] The power Woolf attributes to aesthetic experience, for example in the refiguration of the moon-coin's light as it appears in *Three Guineas,* offers of a new way of both knowing and being aligned with the explicit goals of social emancipation she lays out in the form of her epistolary essay.

Driven by the question "How in your opinion are we to prevent war?" (5) *Three Guineas* confronts, in turn, the conditions encountered by women in their attempts to achieve economic freedom and parity in both in the public and private spheres, tying the "tyrannies and servilities" of one to the other. Framed as a response to letters written soliciting donation to and membership in charitable organizations that promote anti-war efforts, women in education, and women in the professions, the complex rhetorical positioning of *Three Guineas* animates a direct address that stands in a critical synecdoche to institutions of civic life. In so doing, Woolf's narrator limns the realms of education, politics, the Church, the work force, and the Victorian household as agents of patriarchal dominance. While institutional and cultural forces present as shaping agents in *The Years, Three Guinea*s emphatically brings together Woolf's concerns with the emancipation of women thorough educational and professional rights in service of a larger pacifist vision—one that exceeds the notion of

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[103] What intervenes between private experience and its public instantiations may very well be, for Woolf, the variety of aesthetic activity attributable to late romantic conceptions of poetic legislation developed in relation to Shelley and to a latent idea of Poet as cultural hero responsible for poetic world-building attributable to Thomas Carlyle. [See also Elisha Cohn, *Still Lif*e: "The state of aesthetic absorption is not insulated from the pressures of a progressive social vision but rather constitutes its ultimate expression." (9) or Anne-Lise François"…the aesthetic is also the the chief repository of fantasies of self- and world- transformation, realization and adequation." (François, *Open Secrets*, xviii); and Woolf's proposed "gravitational attraction to Carlyle" (Laniel, 118). It is conceivable also that through Carlyle and through Woolf's own complicated engagement with the Carlyle's large shadow we can track the legacy of Schiller's aesthetic writings on Woolf's thinking.

"peace" as the cessation or absence of violent conflict. In so far as the educational, religious, domestic, and professional institutions of interwar England are governed by institutions that oppress women, Woolf argues, they also promulgate war abroad. Grounding the oppressive hierarchies of the public world in the private one, Woolf explicitly asserts that efforts which seek peace abroad must first begin with the liberation of women at home, both in England and in the domestic sphere. Maintaining that without emancipation for women at home there can be no lasting peace, Woolf elaborates her position in relation to existing institutions of civic life. In so doing, she finds that an emancipatory project whose end goals are to be found only in the disbarred membership to, and participation in, existing educational, ecclesiastic, and professional institutions will only reproduce the self-same system of values. Faced with what seems to be the irremediable failure of existing institutions, Woolf instead advocates for "an anonymous and secret Society of Outsiders" composed of the self-identified "daughters of educated men" who, refusing membership to existing orders and organizations, might then from a position of self-authorized otherness express "freedom from unreal loyalities" and thus advocate for social renovation.[104]

The prospects of this social renovation exist, for Woolf in the gap between pastoral's utopian possibilities and its institutional saturation, and moreover in the

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[104] "…this new society, you will be relieved to learn, would have no honorary treasurer, for it would need no funds. It would have no office, no committee, no secretary; it would call no meetings; it would hold no conferences. If name it must have, it could be called the Outsiders' Society. That is not a resonant name, but it has the advantage that it squares with facts—the facts of history, of law, of biography; even, it may be, with the still hidden facts of our still unknown psychology. It would consist of educated men's daughters working in their own class—how indeed can they work in any other?—and by their own methods for liberty, equality and peace."

power of the private aesthetic experience over and against the pageantry of the State, in whose public ceremonies and honorifics Woolf found the glaring "limelight" of the Fascist ideologies :

> —the outsiders will dispense with pageantry not from any puritanical dislike of beauty. On the contrary, it will be one of their aims to increase private beauty; the beauty of spring, summer, autumn; the beauty of flowers, silks, clothes; the beauty which brims not only every field and wood but every barrow in Oxford Street; the scattered beauty which needs only to be combined by artists in order to become visible to all. But they will dispense with the dictated, regimented, official pageantry, in which only one sex takes an active part—those ceremonies, for example, which depend upon the deaths of kings, or their coronations to inspire them. …Consider next time you drive along a country road the attitude of a rabbit caught in the glare of a head-lamp —its glazed eyes, its rigid paws. Is there not good reason to think without going outside our own country, that the "attitudes," the false and unreal positions taken by the human form in England as well as in Germany, are due to the limelight which paralyses the free action of the human faculties and inhibits the human power to change and create new wholes much as a strong head-lamp paralyses the little creatures who run out of the darkness into its beams? It is a guess; guessing is dangerous; yet we have some reason to guide us in the guess that ease and freedom, the power to change and the power to grow, can only be preserved by obscurity; and that if we wish to help the

> human mind to create, and to prevent it from scoring the same rut repeatedly, we must do what we can to shroud it in darkness. (134-135)

The claim Woolf stakes to political agency from the "outside" derives from her gendered self-identification, class position, and insistence on the necessity of private experience over and above (or perhaps under and below) the coercions of propagandistic thinking Woolf associates with the public sphere and the complacencies of a public organized under the homogenizing and centralized power of the patriarchal state's theatricality.[105] Woolf's insistence on the darkness by which one might shroud and thus protect the possibility of individual liberty relies also on the increase of private beauty, understood through or as part of an aesthetic repository if not exclusively or exhaustively, at the very least contiguous with poetic power drawn from a variety of aesthetic experiences organized in a particular onto-temporal-spatial relationship like the one defined by Mikhail Bakhtin:

> a bucolic-pastoral-idyllic chronotope… fused bodily with a specific insular idyllic landscape, one worked out in meticulous detail. This is a dense and fragrant time, like honey, a time of intimate lover's scenes and lyric outpourings, a time saturated with its own strictly limited, sealed-off segment of nature's space, stylized through and through… (103)

Or even by Jacques Rancière when he writes of the self-reportage of a mid-nineteenth

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[105] In Woolf's simultaneous disavowal of The State's pageantry and theatricality and her insistence on the emergence of a community constituted through an experience of "private beauty" the opportunity for reading her with and/or against the Habermasian public sphere also presents itself. See Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*; also Nancy Fraser "Rethinking the Public Sphere."

century worker's springtime weekend in the countryside as participating in:

> "the leisure of aesthetes who enjoy the landscapes forms and light and shade, of philosophers who settle into a country inn to develop metaphysical hypothesis there, of apostles who apply themselves to communicating their faith to all the chance companions encountered on their path or in the inn."

and which he further reads as "a reconfiguration in the here and now of the distribution of space and time, work and leisure" (19).

Thinking of Bakhtin's lyrically saturated pastoral time-space, or Rancière's disrupted distribution of the sensible in relation to Woolf's isolated moments of aesthetic experience in *The Years* and the closed off internal landscape of private beauty which draws heavily on a bucolic formulations for its articulation to which she refers in *Three Guineas* cedes to the realm of Woolf's pastoral its own powerful aesthetic repletion to serve as a well-spring of cultural power, education, and history. Woolf makes her belief in this aesthetic repletion and its power evident in her invitation to the varying auditors of *Three Guineas* 's epistolary address to explore the causes of war through the resources of the literary and, further, in her designation of literary terrain as a province of living language and poetic force exhibiting a privileged prelapsarian relationship between body and song authenticated by nature:

> Come indoors then, and open the books on your library shelves. For you have a library, and a good one. A working library, a living library; a library where nothing is chained down and nothing is locked up; a library where the songs of the singers rise naturally from the lives of the livers. (77)

Importantly, here, as in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf's library provides a site of discursive power that, unlike the institutionally bound, exclusive libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, avails itself freely to anyone with the training to read it. A similar social utopianism linked to aesthetic experience and pastoral repletion inscribes Woolf's dream of a women's college rebuilt on nonhierarchical learning principles and reciprocal relationships constituted through artistic practice.

> Life would be open and easy. People who love learning for itself would gladly come there. Musicians, painters, writers would teach there, because they would learn. What could be of greater help to a writer than to discuss the art of writing with people who were thinking not of examinations or degrees or of what honour or profit they could make literature give them but of the art itself? (44)

An implicit understanding of poetic force and the emancipatory social prospects contained within and accessed through aesthetic experience underpins as much of Woolf's call for peace in its radical and liberating forms as does the obviously more material form of economic justice.

However, just as she valorizes poetic power accessible through a pastoral that could be experienced individually and yet still relationally within a larger social fabric, Woolf also makes explicit the dangers of pastoral as a fallen discourse in its public and institutional manifestations. In these moments, pastoral appears not with the surplus lyrical richness of an idyllic time-space but as, at best, bourgeois complacency and, at worst, an ideology of state violence. Woolf defines the anti-war efforts of the upper-

middle-class liberal of her essay's initial address as occurring in defiance of a class inertia signaled by "…the contented apathy of middle life," "a few acres in Norfolk," and "turning on your pillow and prodding your pigs, pruning your pear trees…" (6) Woolf's not-so-subtle lampoon of class and its pastoral privileges finds its target not just in its domestic contextualization but also in the obverse of Woolf's utopian impulses—in the library which might be "chained down" where the fellows at Oxbridge sit under their "green lamps" (76) , and in a political process that might be best characterized by the practice of "shepherding the Peers into the House of Lords…"(73) In this, *Three Guineas* mirrors the critical ambivalence of *The Years* and its split-vision of pastoral sensibilities. And, yet, what appears as non-developmental resistance or delay in *The Years*, pushes toward a crisis of political signification in *Three Guineas,* intensifying Woolf's contestations for pastoral terrain and the shaping force of pastoral's cultural legislation.

V. Political Signification / Pastoral Legislation

It is common in critical practice, and even more so in a contemporary moment given to sound-bytes and aphorism, to reference Woolf's statement, "As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world," in *Three Guineas* as evidence of a radical feminist politics that eschews national identities and allegiances in favor of a more universal communitarian ethos (129). And indeed, Woolf's sentences could read, in their anaphoric rhythms, much like an echoing reversal of Julius Caesar's famous declaration of martial prowess. Caesar's statement delivers a narrative of imperial and masculinist conquest

concentrated in the first person of the iconic Roman general; Woolf's speaker offers an almost lyrical counter in her repeated disavowals and deferrals of belonging, desire, individual subjectivity and national identity. Caesar's ubiquitously famous message to the Roman Senate communicates his utter victory over Pharnaces II in regimented syllables encoding an ideology of proprietary arrival and inevitable mastery: *I came, I saw, I conquered*. In other words, conquering is as simple as seeing which is as simple, for Caesar, as being. While admirable as a rhetorical tour-de-force, "*veni, vidi, vici*" nevertheless elides the messy human costs of warfare in a compressed telos that fuses androcentrism and inevitable mastery.[106] By contrast Woolf's "As a woman I have no country…" relies on a logic of dispossession and voluntary exile to propel its speaker's evolution from political outsider to global citizen. Her repeated claims to a specifically female subject identity progressively deepen in an embrace of a larger cosmopolitan vision rendered more expansive by its insistence on the disavowal of a national belonging as it attempts to nullify the dissonances of war and mastery alike.

In her repeated claims for a separatist identity shared with all women, she commutes women's abject status under patriarchal law into a more universal subjectivity that might render nationalist belonging obsolete. Posed as such, Woolf's statement stands in opposition to the combined forces of imperial power, war, acquisitiveness, the colonizing patriarchal gaze, and nationalist sentiment.[107] *However*,

[106] I'm indebted to Fredric V. Bogel's fantastic close reading of Caesar's formulation in *Understanding Prose* which has over the years provided an exemplary instance of "reading" for my own students and has remained therefore a congenial echo in my my thinking.

[107] How might an insistent disavowal of national belonging in favor of a global one stage its own prerogative toward total forms?

for Woolf, the radical force of its utterance and the utopia toward which it reaches and through which it which it must pass (the no country / no place of her emancipatory imagination) remains bound by and tied to both nationalist sentiment and a pastoral context from which it originates. It is less common in critical practice, not to mention less useful as a catch phrase, to consider Woolf's purported disavowal of national belonging as highlighting the imperative for a transformational national politics derived from aesthetic experiences inscribed within and conditioned by pastoral. The full passage reads as follows:

> …And if when reason has had its say still some obstinate emotion remains, some love of England dropped into a child's ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes, this drop of pure but irrational emotions she will make serve her to give to England first what she desires of peace and freedom for the whole world. (129)

In the pathos of childhood, the bucolic landscape, and the utopian embrace of Woolf's no-country remains a repository of pastoral experience bound with and to the love of country it simultaneously disavows. At once emblematic of a corrupting lyricism, much like the poison dropped into the ear of old King Hamlet, that drives nationalist sentiment and English imperial politics, *and* bound to the childhood dream of peace and freedom, Woolf's caveat gestures to the ineradicable nurture / nature of a pastoral patriotism that reinscribes nationalism within her more liberating cosmopolitan vision.

A similar deictic governs her attention to the dangers of a commonly thought

foreign Fascist state. The exhortation to look afield at the horror promised by Mussolini and Hitler is, for Woolf, an urgent invitation to look back with increasing intensity at the dangers of patriarchal domination in England—whose atmospheric influence she expresses in a metaphor of organic corruption and pestilence:

> "…something which, if it spreads, may poison both sexes equally. There…is the egg of the very same worm that we know under other names in other countries. There we have in embryo the creature, Dictator as we call him… raising his ugly head, spitting his poison, small still, curled up like a caterpillar on a leaf, but in the heart of England. (65)

This contiguity governs Woolf's use of the childhood ballad and game "Here We Go 'round the Mulberry Bush" to yoke the complementary forces of capitalism, imperialism, and state violence to the deceptiveness of a pastoral conditioning given in song. While the lyrics of the traditional ballad are meant to walk 19th century children through the rote discipline of self-care in readiness for the day, Woolf mobilizes them against what she perceives as the cultural forces of acquisition, greed, and war-time spending ("Here we go round the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree. Give it all to me, give it all to me, all to me. Three hundred millions spent on war.") with the demand that the entry of women in the professional and public sphere should set as their goal "a different song and a different conclusion" (72) —one that might align more clearly with the voices of :

> "the poets answering each other, assuring us of a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks…to discuss with you the capacity of the human

> spirit… to dream the recurring dream that has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time; the dream of peace, the dream of freedom…"

But, as Woolf concludes "with the sound of the guns in your ears you have not asked us to dream" (169). Insofar as the ideology of fascism valorizes also women's labor in the private sphere by utilizing rhetoric that relies on Nature's ratification, Woolf's object in *Three Guineas* is not "simply" the economic and material conditions required for true "freedom" and "peace," but also the nurture/nature of pastoral as the agent of Nature's ratification and, therefore, also the epistemological conditions of possibility for said freedom and peace. The recursive precariousness of this on-going ambiguity constitutes for Woolf the double-edged sword of pastoral's repository and repletion, as well as an urgent need to reclaim its currency. Insofar as the utopian yearning and creative possibilities of the poetic imagination drive Woolf's dream of freedom, peace, and equality, shadowing this dream is the plausible impossibility of its actualization—both in a suspicion that pastoral song may make a frail answer to the sound of guns and also that in the movement from private aesthetic experience to social consensus what poetic power pastoral does offer may itself be susceptible to ideology.

Woolf's pastoral imagination, therefore, appears trapped in an ongoing vacillation between idyllic and corrupted discursive modes, pre- and post- lapsarian forms, and oppressive and emancipatory claims much like an ouroboros of illness and

remedy.[108] The agents of poison and panacea endemic to its topos in *Three Guineas* suggest an almost Derridean definition of Woolf's pastoral as it participates in a fundamental ambivalence that calls into question paternal authority and truth-value, and yet remains undergirded by economy of violence at the heart of signification.[109] If pastoral cannot be improved, but is, rather, trapped in a non-developmental perseveration, one important intervention (among the many others) Woolf makes in *Three Guineas* is in confronting the necessary failure of the pastoral in its public and institutional imaginings though an address to the latent or trapped anarchic energies of

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[108] See Leavis, Q.D. "Caterpillars of the Commonwealth Unite!" Scrutiny (Sept 1938): 203-214; Leavis's article mocks Woolf's communist allegiances as a parody of Marx and Engel's rallying cry "Workers of the World Unite!" from their Communist Manifest (1884). Jane Marcus picks up on the additional allusive resonances available in Leavis's title by locating the various cankers and worms of Woolf's essay in the vow Henry Bolingbroke's makes in Shakespeare's *Richard II* to eliminate the corrupt courtiers, Bushy, Bagot, and Green: "The caterpillars of the commonwealth / Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away." (2.2.170-171) While Leavis, scathing in her condemnation of Woolf's essay and its writer, obviously means to be parodic, her title's reference to parasitical sycophants who infect England's Garden state hits very close to the political mark Woolf makes of pastoral as a kind of national romance. See Marcus's introduction to Three Guineas, *xlvii.* Also: Snaith, Anna. "Wide Circles: The Three Guineas Letters." Woolf Studies Annual 6 (2000): 1-168. Marcus likewise identifies the use of ballad as providing a "working class linguistic subtext" to Woolf's essay. See also oa possible resonance in Stephen Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse, containing a pleasant invective against Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, Jesters and such like Caterpillars of the Commonwealth* (c.1579)

[109] See Jacques Derrida and "The Violence of the Letter" in *of Grammatology*, tens. Giatry Spivak : "Plato's Pharmekon" *Dissemination*, trans B Johnson; This reading begins to push us toward an understanding of pastoral, for Woolf, as a kind of or experience of *arche-writing*: a possible metonym for nature and/or the "ultra-transcendental condition of all life in general" (Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*, 2008, p 26) The urgent work proposed by *Three Guineas* in some sense then, in service of Woolf's larger vision, is an unthinking of pastoral, itself, as an agent of intersubjective violence. *Note: Is pastoral then only ever "merely" ideology? Revisit the conditions laid out for pastoral in Annabel Patterson's *Pastoral and Ideology* and Woolf's own "violent moments of being" for a definition of pastoral's legislative force* Moreover, a deconstructive reading of Woolf's pastoral repository and its discursive ambivalence might move Woolf's treatment of pastoral beyond the parameters of self-contradiction and (anti)pastoral dialectics suggested by critics of pastoral such as Judith Haber and Henry Berger jr and who claim for pastoral paradox as its defining trait. Rather remain trapped in the somewhat smug gesture that conceives of pastoral's object as a "self-consciously self-contradictory" poetics, Woolf's pastoral might also push us into a consideration of pastoral form and the renovating force of an aesthetic materialism.

its pastoral repletion and a confrontation with this violence.[110] Insofar as in *The Years* this vacillation appears in contrasting frames of individual aesthetic experience and socio-cultural privilege, they contribute to a condition of stasis, appearing as an ongoing process of self-canceling revelation that may foreclose any direct ethical imperative derived from their occurrence. In *Three Guineas,* however, Woolf's stated desire for the experience of private beauty to be part of a larger politics asks that we also consider these isolated moments of pastoral reverie in light of the aesthetic failure cited by both Woolf and her critics. It may not be enough to say that the unassimilable resistance of "private" or uncounted experience is the ends in and of itself of Woolf's pastoral vision, but rather that in the division between *The Years* and *Three Guineas* and in Woolf's desire for social progress, lives the unresolved potentiality of pastoral's aesthetic repository; in their accrual, and in the unresolved tensions of their disclosure/ nondisclosure, the non-actualization of private utopian moments in *The Years* push toward the purgation of pastoral's corrupted forms and the release of anarchic energies in *Three Guineas.*

VI. Pastoral Repletion / Pastoral Purgation

In the light of reason cast by the new six-pence moon, Woolf's speaker archly exercises her newly-found cultural power by assigning conditions to the recipients of

[110] Likewise, in *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* Chistine Froula reads *Three Guineas* as "breaking through *The Years'* silences and evasions to expose the scapegoating of women as the structural act of barbarism that founds the masculine public sphere." (260) Following Rene Girard *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), Froula relies on the scapegoating as being constituted by the violence of a ritual sacrifice that is also the foundation of community and social cohesion. For a fully inflected consideration of "scapegoat" and its relation to the pharmakon and interpretation see also Kenneth Burke *Permanence and Change* (1935), also for plausible consideration of "progressive form."

her donations. Her response, therefore, to a letter containing a request for donations from a women's college taken along with her own criticism of the existing models for their participation in the tyrannies and servilities of an existing patriarchal model, is not to prescribe institutional changes with her guinea, but to request, surprisingly, that the women's college be burned to the ground:

> No guinea of earned money should go to rebuilding the college on the old plan; just as certainly none could be spent upon building a college upon a new plan; …therefore the guinea should be earmarked "Rags. Petrol. Matches." And this note should be attached to it. "Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning building scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows. And let the daughters of educated men dance round the fire and heap armful upon armful of dead leaves upon the flames. And let their mothers lean from the upper windows and cry, 'Let it blaze! Let it blaze! For we have done with this education!' (45)

The ensuing scene of Dionysian ecstasy and release of anarchic energies she describes in the bonfire reads as an inverted figure of lament: in the impossibility of the desired educational *communitas* and its reconfiguration in larger cultural sphere; one must destroy the thing itself in order to mourn it. That is, the violence enacted in Woolf's act of imaginary arson is a response to both the violence of a perverted pastoral discourse, and the equal violence of the utopian countermeasure which cannot escape its inevitable submission to the existing law of pastoral signification. In the

exhortation to scare the nightingales and to incarnadine the willows, the fire gives figuration to the returning force of what is excluded and repressed in the disciplinary system of pastoral expressed as patriarchal law.[111]

A companion sequence in the 1891 chapter of *The Years* demonstrates, in miniature, a moment of domestic insurrection suppressed by patriarchal provenance. Col. Abel Pargiter having harried Eleanor into seeking a gift for her cousin, visits his sister-in-law, Eugénie, and her two girls, Maggie and Sally, to deliver Maggie's birthday necklace and a camellia for Eugénie. He finds them out in the garden burning leaves in a celebratory bonfire for Maggie's birthday. The Colonel's initial arrival recalls the girls from the garden, but while he visits with their mother, they slip back outside:

> "Oh, those children!" she exclaimed. She rose and want to the window. The Colonel followed her. The children had stolen back into the garden. The bonfire was burning fiercely. A clear pillar of flame rose in the middle of the garden. The little girls were laughing and shouting as they danced round it. A shabby old man, something like a decayed groom to look at, stood there with a rake in his hand. Eugénie flung up the window and cried out. But they went on dancing. The Colonel leant out too; they looked like wild creatures with their hair flying. He would have liked to go down and jump over the bonfire, but he was too old. The flames leapt high—clear gold, bright red.

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[111] "Incarnadine" here elicits its Shakespearean coinage and associated meaning with murderous or bloody complicity: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red." (Macbeth, 2.2.75-78)

> “Bravo!” he cried, clapping his hands. “Bravo!”
>
> “Little demons!” said Eugénie. She was as much excited as they were, he observed. She leant out the window and cried to the old man with the rake: “Make it blaze! Make it blaze!”
>
> But the old man was raking out the fire. The sticks were scattered. The flames had sunk.
>
> The old man pushed the children away. (117)

The bonfire upon which Maggie and Sally heap their dried leaves and that incites both Abel Pargiter and his sister-in-law Eugénie to lean from the window and to cry “Let it blaze! Let it blaze!” (117) is stamped out and contained by the old gardener (certainly a surrogate figure for an ancient and moribund order of patriarchal law) just as Digby, Abel’s brother and the nuclear family’s patriarch, unexpectedly returns home. The scene, previously organized around the Colonel’s desire for and adventure into the feminized domestic sphere of his sister-in-law and the signs of chaos and misrule he finds there—untidy women and children, packing shavings that litter the floor, extravagant decorative mirrors from Italy, fires burning in the garden—is immediately circumscribed by and reoriented around talk of politics and patriarchal disapproval. Initially drawn to Eugénie and the feminine consolation she offers (he is both aesthetically pleased by her beauty and seeking someone to confide in about his mistress) he is seduced by their abandon and joy, and quickly becomes an accomplice to the scene of domestic liberation. While the vignette expresses alliances between men (the male gardener and family patriarch effectively contain the fire) the norms of

the Victorian household become legible largely by the forces that escape its discipline. Colonel Pargiter finds himself, if not entirely aligned with, at least sympathetic to the ladies' resistance to the dominant order, laughing at Sally's imitation of her father's dictate to "reform one's habits" (120). The prospectives of this alliance, however, are limited, as elsewhere in the novel, by the narrative's imposition of another social engagement that forecloses the integration of aesthetic experience as progressive social reform.

In keeping with *The Years'* ethos of suspended development, the bonfire interlude closes with Abel Pargiter's musing on his *own* obsolescence. As autumn draws in and the leaves fall, the narrative's elegiac tenor still authorizes the prominence of the male subject as the center of cultural value despite his proximity to an almost-but-not-quite liberating arson that might likewise free him from the obligation of his own centrality, leaving the possibility of this occurrence still tantalizingly unrealized.[112] In *Three Guineas,* however, the scene of the college's destruction mobilizes both the renunciation of pastoral and the triumph of its energies. Read as mourning for a social utopianism that cannot manifest itself unproblematically through pastoral means, the fire and the intensity of its anarchic ecstasies gives radical figuration to that which it mourns. In Woolf's command to "set fire to the old

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[112] Christine Froula contends that the early childhood experiences of Rose Pargiter in *The Years* is one of foreclosed speech that "illuminates the function of repression in instituting and maintaining gender while occluding its nature as loss." (235) While Maggie and Sally's garden bonfire poses the possibility of liberation from the repression that constitutes the gendered script both girls must adhere to, the communal and institutional bonfire of *Three Guineas* demystifies and reveals that loss, allowing it to be represented and therefore mourned. It is in some ways an answer to the condition of gendered cultural melancholia identified in *A Room of One's Own* in the first chapter of this dissertation.

hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning building scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows" we find not only wild abandon and the pleasures to be had in the destruction of oppressive institutions but a repossession of pastoral force (34). To "scare" the nightingales may very well mean to frighten the familiar feminized icons of elegiac consolation deployed by countless generations of male pastoral poets in their appropriation of both feminine experience and female voices, even as it simultaneously supplies an animating and catalytic force to their flight that might startle them to life. Likewise, the willows may be painted red from the light of the bon-fire's flames or rendered "incarnadine" in the Shakespearean sense—blood-stained in their long-standing associations with female-bodied grief and their numerous iterations in the "dead leaves" the daughters of educated men may now freely heap upon the flames. Yet, in "incarnadine" also echoes the promise of incarnation: to represent, actualize, or to become the living embodiment of, to cover in flesh, to make real. The release of anarchic energies in acts of imaginative and publicly celebrated arson, reconstitutes for Woolf a different kind of community; the flames return the energies bound to pastoral's corrupted public forms to the possibility of their reformation in private experience. In this, Woolf's progressive pastoral—defined anew as the experience of beauty which refuses to become a prescriptive morality by remaining private—nevertheless offers a kind of ethics or moral as is it authorized by and emerges from the authenticity of private experience. Simultaneously, the fire, like the shrouding and fertile darkness of the creative mind Woolf calls for in *Three Guineas*, provides a figure of aposiopesis—a breaking off or

sudden cessation of voice that even in the very act of its silence implies an over-abundance of possible meanings. The blankness that follows the purgation and release of anarchic energies in *Three Guineas*, then, proposes an invitation to participate in the reassignment of pastoral's repletion, to take part in a process of social emancipation that proceeds hand in hand with an aesthetic one.

AFTERWARD

"But," you may say, "we asked you to talk about Woolf and pastoral…"

The period in which I wrote the majority of this dissertation on Woolf was one of intense intellectual focus after a long institutional hiatus. I'd been a single mom with two young boys— one in pre-school and the other just starting fourth grade— when I started graduate school. I felt continuously exasperated in my attempts to foster my own education and growth as a scholar, and to provide for, nurture, and guide my boys, as a young mother. I was both inside and outside institutional norms—an Ivy League graduate student in a nationally ranked program supporting three people on my stipend. My days started earlier than I would have liked and ended later than I wished. I'd wrangle them off to school by 7am. I'd teach and attend classes during the day, and fly home to meet them fresh off the bus. The ensuing hours would be a frenzy of snacks, homework, dinner, baths, bedtime. I'd often fall asleep reading to them at night, and I would set an alarm to make sure I was up again by 10pm to do my homework and class prep. I called it the third shift. I felt both a little too ahead of my time and always behind.

When I started my graduate program, Cornell did not have family leave policies in place for graduate students and little idea about how to support a single parent in academia. Once when reaching out to a faculty member in the humanities about the kind of alienation I was experiencing, she replied "Oh, all the faculty have

kids. You shouldn't feel like an outsider, at all. Try being gay." When my youngest son broke his leg in two places, just after New Year and just before the start of my fourth semester, necessitating three months in a cast, time in a wheelchair, physical therapy, and the kind of full time care he'd received as an infant, there were no institutional provisions for a substitute in my classes, adjusting my time to degree expectations, nor dispensation for incomplete work under extenuating circumstances. Instead I received a scathing letter from my then DGS (who, happily, is no longer at Cornell) about the potential loss of my funding for outstanding work. Unfortunately, my time in residence as a graduate student at Cornell coincided with the economic downturn that rocked the academy on a national scale and necessitated budget cuts to many programs. When I began my program, I'd done so with the expectation of six years funding and likely seven to eight. Seventh and eighth year doctoral students were common in my program, and they contributed to a sense of strong collegiality and deep institutional knowledge. By the time I was a fourth year, we were collectively fighting to keep anything beyond five. Ever since then, a catastrophic sense of belatedness, of never having enough time for thinking and writing or mothering, of feeling a different kind of wolf at the door, has ghosted my devotion to both callings.

As of this writing, not only has Cornell made progress in how they support graduate student families, including family leave provisions, but I have the material support of a partner, and my two sons are well on their way to adulthood. My oldest will graduate from his own upstate university in May. The adjustments in Cornell's policies, however, came too late to help me through the spring semester and summer

following my son's accident. It was a season in which I felt deeply defeated by my own failure to be able to do it all, in which the edges of my library books and piles of unfinished projects hurt in their sharpness, in which first, my maternal grandmother, and then my dog, died, in which my youngest son spent most of his days in the elementary school principal's office waging his own private war against institutional injustice, and it was one in which I found it increasingly hard to face the challenges in front of me. It's tempting at the close of this enterprise to make it look "easy" by glossing over the demands of scholarship and living with some well-honed *sprezzatura*—to separate out the personal struggles and the professional successes or even vice versa. But, that doesn't sit quite right to me, as I reflect on a project devoted to a thinker who felt strongly about economic parity as a feminist concern, and who, crucially, in *Three Guineas*, located her life and the lives of other women on the "bridge which connects the private house with the world of public life" (22).

As my material circumstances have improved, so has my ability to carve out time to write carefully and to think deeply—not always in proportion to each other or with clear correlation. For, as any student of Woolf can tell you, or any mother (single or not), the emotional demands of motherhood, and, more broadly, the manner in which women are socialized according to an insidious and deterministic association of our bodies with biological reproduction, are deeply antithetical to artistic parity, literary production, and what constitutes "real labor" in a capitalist society. Nancy Fraser makes this point beautifully in her critique of the Habermasian public sphere in *Unruly Practices* where she writes:

> "natural kinds of classification of childrearing as symbolic reproduction and of other work as material reproduction is potentially ideological…It could be used…to legitimize the institutional separation of childrearing from paid work, separation that many feminists…consider a linchpin of modern forms of women's subordination. (116)

Sixty years earlier in 1928, Virginia Woolf vehemently made this same point in *A Room of One's Own.* She makes it again, in 1938, in *Three Guineas*, writing that the task of the women in the Society of Outsiders is, firstly to earn their own living, but that "above all she must press for a wage to be paid by the State legally to the mothers of educated men" (130). She argues that the freedom of both women and men depend on it.

As is the case with much of Woolf's political thinking, the idea that we might legitimize child-rearing as material labor and compensate for its activity in the private household, and, further, that the shape of a society built on truly egalitarian principles is consequent to this legitimization, is still an idea whose moment is yet to come. Others of Woolf's ideas—like the radical pacifism that asks us to interrogate national belonging and patriotic sentiment for its role in war-making; the system of gender relations inherent in the "looking glass vision" and its involvement in all violent and heroic action; the idea that the tyrannies of the household are linked to the tyrannies of the world at large; that gender emancipation must involve both men and women; that gender could and ought to be more fluid than it was currently conceived of; that the specters that structure and dominate our cultural imaginations are harder to kill than

you might imagine; that, as she writes in "Thoughts on Peace During an Air Raid," a "subconscious Hitlerism" abided in the hearts of men and women alike, and that it must be relentlessly and ruthlessly faced—retain an eerie and recursive relevance. This is especially the case in the twenty-first century as we continue to see endless war, attempts to regulate and police gender, assaults on the reproductive rights of women, alt-right white nationalism, and retrograde conservative agendas based on xenophobia and fear in the drive to make something "great again."

What has this to do with Woolf and pastoral? Of an obsession with a color, Maggie Nelson writes in her book Bluets: *"It began slowly. An appreciation, an affinity. Then one day, it became more serious…"* (1) The year in which the majority of this writing was accomplished was also a year in which I found signs and symmetries of Woolf and pastoral everywhere. Where "working on Woolf" meant having friends who sent me Happy Birthday wishes on Woolf's birthday or death day and catching her echo in James Baldwin's meditations on Shakespeare; it meant framing essays connecting "Becky," Beyonce and Solange Knowles, and Woolf's "Angel of the Household," and dreaming papers on Joni Mitchell's song "Little Green" that linked Woolf and Mitchell together through the uses of pastoral elegy and maternal melancholia. I found Woolf and green in everything. In *The Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes calls "projection" the "appropriate tonality of imaginative readings" (131).

This was also the year in which I finally travelled to Rodmell to see Monk's House, and then walked on the South Downs along windy water meadows back to the

station along the River Ouse. I picked blackberries from the brambles and ate them on the train with brown bread and butter from the local pub. Later, back at home and working again on Susan and the "consolations of natural happiness," I would read about these very same blackberries in Woolf's diaries and feel a sense of surprising cosmic rightness. It was the summer in which I went to the Lake District, and carried a fallen apple from Virginia and Leonard's garden at Monk's House all the way with me to a tarn in Grasmere. I left it there, along with a feather I'd found below in the village pastures (*"something" I thought "about the wild goose…" as I had picked it up*) in the wind of a cool late July.

It was also a year of Facebook scandals over data mining and election interference, and one in which I felt the particulars pangs of targeted advertising. I was trying very hard to define the tension between Woolf's cosmopolitan vision and her seemingly communitarian sympathies, between her condemnation of pastoral conventions as a form of institutional ideology and its sheer persistence in her work: we were in the thick of it; we were on the horns of the dilemma. Catalogues for clothing lines with names like *Amour Vert* kept appearing in my mailbox. (Was it my frequent use of #greendreams on Instagram?) With each flip of the page featuring picnic-having and book-reading models in pretty, flowing, clothes, I felt more and more resentful at finding I was a demographic after all—that I'd been "seen' by this woman-owned and operated clothing franchise. Despite asking for no more print catalogues, they continued to be delivered. Then, as I continued to work on *Three Guineas*, came the day that the *Anthropologie* catalog—with its over-priced rompers

and its haute-couture sundresses, and for which I, admittedly, have an unconscionable love—arrived. As I came into the house, my arms full of newspaper circulars, notices of local elections, credit card offers, and coupons, I dropped the catalogue and it fell open, face down, on the floor. When I turned it over, I realized just how far down the rabbit hole we'd gone: There, on the centerfold, lounged a young woman, in a rust-toned, white-striped romper, reading her book against a backdrop of soft-focus leaves, and a large caption that read:

"As I woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."

I was incensed and mortified.

Appropriated. Misquoted. Slapped on top of an advertisement for a corporate conglomerate that sells women's clothing—which is not to say that Woolf didn't like pretty things. She did, and she frequently chastised herself for vanity, a practice I've always felt was the subtlest of self-aggrandizements. This is to say, however, that when Woolf expresses this famous edict, her purpose was to provide the parameters for a pacifist vision, not to participate in and perpetuate an exploitative capitalist system she saw as one instrument in a greater system of patriarchal dominance and war. Central to this purpose, is her disavowal of national allegiances: As a woman she *wants* no country. This disavowal is what, in fact, propels the stronger claim to a larger and better world.

She'd have hated it. I hated it.

And, yet there it was: green, promising, and glossy. A woman at leisure—-the leisure Woolf insisted was necessary to the exercise of a world-shaping imagination —

expressing the kind of liberty, pleasure, and ease Woolf defends in *A Room of One's Own* —a *locus amoenus*-—a *sola penserosa* in a moment of pure aesthetic contemplation. It was the kind of place that poet, Rita Dove, envisions for her speaker, an exasperated mother escaping the constant demands of household duties, in the opening lines of her poem "Day Star."

"She wanted a little room for thinking," Dove writes.

In the poem, Dove's speaker seeks a place, if only for an hour, that exists away from her sweetly demanding daughter, from the "diapers steaming / on the line" (2-3) and the doll "slumped behind the door" (4). Likewise, it's the place she returns to in her imagination seeking respite from the husband who rolls over and lurches "into her" (22) at night. It's the place where she might close her eyes and see "her own / vivid blood" (10-11). In *The Years*, society hostess, wife, and mother, Lady Kitty Lasswade travels hundreds of miles from London by train, many miles by motor car, and several more, finally by foot through the woods and to the very top of a high hill in order to find a solitude "uncultivated, uninhabited, exiting by itself, for itself" (263). Without the resources of an English lord, Dove's speaker drags a chair behind the garage to wait out her children's naps, so that she might find a "floating maple leaf," (10) so that she might be "nothing, / pure nothing, in the middle of the day" (23-24). The glossy soft focus green of the *Anthropologie* centerfold was precisely the kind of place where a woman (let's call her "Mary") might pause, and laying aside her book, search for the silver fish thoughts that might shape much of the twentieth-century literary imagination and beyond.

This dissertation is, in many ways, an argument not just for the persistence of pastoral, but the *inescapability* of it. I don't just mean in advertising. Although to think this pastoral presence in a catalogue for women's clothing is inconsequential would be a mistake. Woolf's preoccupation with pastoral absolutely includes processes of subjectification and cultural conditioning essential to the function of a capitalist economic system. I mean more as an indispensable gesture of possibility. Pastoral, for Woolf, is inescapable precisely for its link to possible worlds, to better worlds enabled by the private activity of aesthetic contemplation. Both, I think, dear to Woolf's own heart. For Kitty, in *The Years*, the "pastoral" is the place where time and self cease. For Dove's speaker, however, it's the place where she might dream-build a palace.

In *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, when Laurence Sterne's narrator, Yorick, rhapsodizes about the "Sweet pliability of man's spirit," he refers to the sympathetic faculties of human imagination. As he sits in a room, waiting anxiously for the passport that will allow him to safely leave France and continue his journey, he reads Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. While restricted in his actual freedom to travel, he feels happily transported to the imaginative world of Shakespeare's Messina, instead. This experience of literary, rather than material, transport and liberty enables a further fantasy for Yorick. He narrates an old habit of restorative reverie, a sentimental practice in which he walks a "smooth velvet path which fancy has scattered over with rosebuds of delights…" (84) In this flight of imagination, he encounters Dido wandering the fields of Elysium, and mourns with her, losing his feelings in her. He reemerges from his reverie and this communion of

imagined sorrows “strengthen’d and refresh’d” (84). In leaving the world and inhabiting an alternate space structured by the literary imagination, and in his identification with Dido, which negates his already existing self, Yorick conquers despair and re-meets the world. As Yorick’s reverie ends, he’s rewarded with the conferral of his passport, the document that ratifies his rights to free passage. This doubled moment of aesthetic contemplation, sentimental, and both pastoral and elegiac, is one that leads to a new ontological status and enables a new relation to possibility.

Beyond the overtly pastoral character of *A Sentimental Journey’*s more rustic scenes, this moment of reverie, this loss of self, and the necessities of itinerancy (not to mention the centrality of Shakespeare to certain kinds of authorial praxis) are just a few of the seeds that might grow in Woolf’s and Sterne’s common garden. The reverie of Woolf’s narrator in *A Room of One’s Own,* in which she discusses the nuptials of the androgynous mind and its necessity to artistic creation, emerges out of a moment much the same: an interval of freedom and peace in which one might watch swans float down the river or pluck the petals from a rose. Where Woolf’s contribution diverges from Sterne’s, however, is that for Woolf, pastoral is not a panacea but contested terrain—contested terrain on which she advocates free and and fearless trespass. “It is thus,” she writes in “The Leaning Tower,” a paper she read to the Workers' Educational Association in Brighton, in May of 1940:

> that English literature will survive this war and cross the gulf—if commoners and outsiders like ourselves make that country our own country, if we teach ourselves how to read and to write, how to preserve, and how to create. (154)

The gulf to which Woolf refers is the gulf that separates men from women and rich from poor. She is sharing her vision of a classless world in which a strong and varied literature, emerging from a well of common experiences, ushers in the society of the future. "The poet," she writes (lightly echoing the cadences of a shepherd in *A Winter's Tale*) "is a dweller in two worlds, one dying, the other struggling to be born" (149).

Currently, the most interesting studies of both Woolf and pastoral are ones that focus on new modes of being and alternate systems of relation. Studies of pastoral not strictly confined to classical literary understandings of the form share affinities with the fields of ecofeminist and queer ecocriticsm. Teaching my seminar on Woolf this semester, I was struck, if not for the first time, by the deep identification between the poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and her cocker-spaniel, Flush. In *Flush*, poet and dog share an affinity so deep that they are able to rescue each other from the confines of the Victorian household on Wimpole Street and escape to Italy where the surest sign of their liberation is the bounty of the landscape. The lakes, pinewoods, and mountains of the countryside provide the freedom and sunshine in which both poet and animal thrive—where Browning, perhaps a little like Dove's narrator, and Flush meditate on the comings and goings of lizards. This vivification is less about the country and the city itself, than it is about a new kind of relationality enabled by the open countryside

and by a hiatus from England's rigid class structures—a release from the demands of intersubjective experience clotted by societal expectations. In the freedom to find solitude (with each other, of course), and released from strictures of class and gender, Mrs. Browning becomes a new person who tosses "off a tumbler of Chianti and slept the sounder" (76). On the table of their house in Italy they keep "a flowering branch of oranges on the dinner-table instead of one denuded, sour, yellow fruit" (76). It is not in England, if we remember, that Orlando first becomes a woman. Nor is it in England that he first enjoys the freedom of womanhood. In the countrysides of the Ottoman Empire, Orlando reassesses the fixity not just of her embodied existence, but of England's systems of primogeniture and property law to which she now has a different relationship.

The culture-natures and the nature-cultures of Woolf's pastoral imagination highlight, again for, that the moments of reverie and aesthetic contemplation, and indeed the rights that enable those reveries, the space and material conditions necessary for aesthetic contemplation are essential to projects of cultural and socio-political renovation. Out of the pastoral chronotope of Bahktin and the pastoral leisure narrated by Rancière come new ontological understandings. Rancière, as we understand it, has read his Woolf. As ideology, however, and as exclusive property of a white patriarchy, Woolf's pastoral imagination falters.

In *Between the Acts*, wife and mother, Isa, trapped in an unhappy marriage, by class expectations, and her seemingly clueless in-laws, contemplates flagstones in the stable yard, cracked by the roots of an unripe pear tree. As she does so, she cryptically

ruminates on “the burden laid on me in the cradle; murmured by the waves; breathed by the restless elm trees; crooned by singing women; what we would remember; what we would forget” (106). From within the confines, wards, and dungeons of both English domesticity and the English country house, Isa’s experience of pastoral abundance is not a happy one. She experiences none of pastoral’s freedoms and possibilities, only its weight. Later that night, as she observes her husband and his family reading, she envisions them in the circle of light cast by the reading lamp, in the “rosy corner of a sun baked field” (147) while she remains in the darkness. Single playwright, Miss La Trobe experiences the pastoral terrain of the same country house much differently. Hiding behind a tree after the performance of her play, she experiences a sudden rhapsody in a swarm of starlings:

> In one flock they pelted it like so many winged stones. The whole tree hummed with the whizz they made, as if tree had plucked a wire. A whiz, a buzz rose from the bird-buzzing, bird-vibrant, bird-blackened tree. The tree became a rhapsody, a quivering cacophany, a whizz and vibrant rapture, branches, leaves, birds syllabling discordantly life, life, life without measure, without stop devouring the tree. Then up! Then off!” (142)

Later, dosing under the painting of pasture land in the local pub, Miss La Trobe will have a vision, perhaps even of Isa and her husband Giles squaring off up in the county house, and experience the moment of poetic inspiration, for her new play, as a revisitation of the tree “pelted with starlings.”

Pastoral must always be demystified. Seclusion among the nightingales and willows is not to be trusted. One woman's pastoral may be another one's prison. "Let us never cease from thinking," she exhorts in *Three Guineas*, "what is this 'civilisation' in which we find ourselves? What are these ceremonies and why should we take part in them" (77). Woolf recognizes the dangers of the pastoral imagination, as well, but she doesn't stop trying to appropriate and repopulate the poetics of pastoral in service of something better. Even as she commits imaginative arson in the pages of *Three Guineas*, she asks for new words and new methods in order to dream "the dream of peace, the dream of freedom" as a material reality.

The summer in which I traveled to Monk's House was also the summer in which a coffeehouse friend and fellow writer, Ron Drummond, knowing my interests in pastoral, recommended the writing of John Crowley, likewise a friend of his. While *Engine Summer* is Ron's favorite, he vigorously advised me to read Crowley's novel *Little, Big, or the Parliament of Faeries.* And so I did—savoring every delightful, dense, glorious, odd, magical word of it. I read it slowly and with relish and joy, and when I finished reading it, I told him that, in places, it reminded me of Woolf and *To The Lighthouse.* Surprised, Ron wrote to Crowley to tell him so. When Crowley responded, it was to affirm, emphatically, that he had patterned pieces of his novel specifically on *To The Lighthouse.* Ron was delighted. I was, too. He enthusiastically lent me a precious first edition of Crowley's short stories so that I could read one in which the author imagines Virginia Woolf conjured up from…where? Perhaps the past, or the dead…or even Elysium, to visit his modern day apartment. In it she

appears a lost spirit, a bit vague and confused by her own modern manifestation. She disappears again, in the span of a day, ephemeral, after all. I was disappointed, for I felt it missed something of her strength and vigor. For me, Woolf is a figure possessed of a world-shaping poetic imagination, who locates, in the tiniest of private ecstasies, moments of self-sovereignty and re-thinks them in relation to larger historical forces.

As I write this, I am writing in my own office at home; often my family will wander in while I am working; I do, however, have a lock on the door and I can use it. I threaten to get a sign that says "The Doctor is In" to put on it, so they know when I'm open to interruption.

It is dusk. A blue hour. I look out at my garden at the brambles making shadows at the edge of the yard. I think about my favorite Robert Hass poem, "Meditation at Lagunitas." It begins: "All the new thinking is about loss. / In this it resembles all the old thinking."

I think about the persistence of pastoral.

In the stillness, I hear the woods thinking, too, as they echo *blackberry, blackberry, blackberry….*

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