

**From Pen to Print:  
Virginia Woolf, Materiality and the Art of Writing**

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## Abstract

This thesis interrogates the relationship between the material conditions of Virginia Woolf's writing practices and her work as a printer and publisher at the Hogarth Press. While the role played by the Press in the intellectual and literary innovations of modernism has been well-documented, less attention has been paid to its influence upon Woolf's own literary experimentalism. By examining its effect on the material and visual aspects of her compositional processes, from the manuscript drafts to the physical construction of her printed works, this thesis explores how her involvement in the crafting of her publications (including practices of writing, editing, printing and binding) enabled her to situate her fictions alongside the visual and material innovations of modernism. Underpinned by an engagement with Bloomsbury epistemology and aesthetics, it aims to contribute to understandings of Woolf's textual practices in the context of early twentieth-century visual and material cultures.

The thesis examines several of Woolf's texts printed between 1917, the year the Hogarth Press was established, and 1931, the year in which *The Waves*, often considered her most experimental work, was published. By drawing on the field of print culture and the materialist turn in Woolf scholarship, it, firstly, considers Woolf's early short stories and how these enable her to challenge the distinction between visual and verbal forms of representation. Chapter two examines the extent to which her short stories, as well as her embodied experience of printing them, shaped the form of *Jacob's Room*. The manuscript version of *Mrs Dalloway* is the focus of chapter three, and it suggests that the novel can be considered a palimpsest in the way that earlier versions of text reverberate in the published edition. This chapter also offers new ways of thinking about Woolf's conceptualisation of textuality as fluid rather than fixed. Woolf's use of colour in her writing is given particular attention in the final two chapters of the thesis. Chapters on *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* reveal how these visual signifiers enable her to weave a feminist-materialist discourse into the textures of her work. In establishing a connection between Woolf's literary concerns with materiality and her feminist politics, this thesis argues that her use of objects, colours and forms work to reinsert the forgotten histories of women in the pages of her published texts.

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## Abbreviations

### Works by Virginia Woolf

- A ‘Anon’ [1941], in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 6, 1933-1941*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2011), pp. 581-599
- AROO *A Room of One’s Own* [1929] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- B&G ‘BLUE. & GREEN.’, in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. ed. Susan Dick (New York and London: Harcourt Brace, 1985), p. 142
- D1 *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 1*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1997)
- D2 *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 2*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1978)
- D3 *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 3*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1980)
- D4 *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 4*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1982)
- FVB ‘Foreword to Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell’, in *The Complete Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 5, 1929-1932*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2009), pp. 137-142
- JRH *Jacob’s Room: The Holograph Draft*, transcribed and ed. Edward L. Bishop (New York: Pace University Press, 2010)
- KG *Kew Gardens* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1919)
- MD *Mrs Dalloway* [1925] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- MDB ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ [1923], in *Mrs Dalloway’s Party*, ed. Stella McNicholl (London: Vintage, 2010), pp. 19-28
- MDH *The Hours: The British Museum Manuscript of Mrs Dalloway*, ed. Helen M. Wussow (New York: Pace University Press, 2010)
- MF ‘Modern Fiction’ [1919], in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- MW *The Mark on the Wall* [1917] (London: Hogarth Press, 2017)
- L1 *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume I*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1975)

- L2 *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume 2*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1976)
- L3 *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume 3*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1977)
- L4 *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume 4*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1978)
- L5 *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume 5*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1979)
- O *Orlando* [1928] (London: Penguin, 2016)
- SO ‘Solid Objects’ [1921], in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (New York and London: Harcourt Brace, 1985), pp. 102-107
- SP ‘[A] Sketch of the Past’, in *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002), pp. 78-160
- TL *To the Lighthouse* [1927] (London: Penguin, 1992)
- TLH *To the Lighthouse: The Original Holograph Draft*, ed. Susan Dick (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982)
- TW *The Waves* [1931] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
- UN ‘An Unwritten Novel’, in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* ed. Susan Dick (New York and London: Harcourt Brace, 1985), pp. 112-121
- WS *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* [1934], in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 6, 1933-1941*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2011), pp. 36-64

## Introduction:

### Integuments of Thought: Writing, Materiality and Aesthetics

Virginia Woolf was fascinated with tangible and palpable materials. Throughout her diaries, letters and fictional writings, her epistemological thinking about life, literature and aesthetics is underpinned by her interest in materiality. In *Orlando* (1928), Woolf highlights the interaction between the palpability of words and the intangible ‘thoughts’ they can convey. As a woman sitting contemplatively in the chapel at Knole, Orlando touches the pages of the blood-stained prayer book rumoured to have been held by Mary Queen of Scots on the scaffold, and thinks about the opening stanzas of her poem ‘The Oak Tree’:

The letter S, she reflected, is the serpent in the poet’s Eden. Do what she would there were still too many of these sinful reptiles in the first stanza of ‘The Oak Tree’. But ‘S’ was nothing, in her opinion, compared with the termination ‘ing’. The present participle is the Devil himself, she thought (now that we are in the place for believing in Devils). To evade such temptations is the first duty of the poet, she concluded [...]. We must shape our words till they are the thinnest integument for our thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

At this point in the text, Woolf draws attention to the influence of the room upon her thoughts, how its signifiers of religious iconography permeate and condition her writing. Within the spaces of her forebears, Orlando adopts a tone of reverence for her ‘faith of her own’: her literary art (O, p. 122). Dissatisfied with the sibilance of her stanzas, she concludes that her words must be shaped until they provide a thin ‘integument’, a skin-like covering that can convey the integrity of her thoughts to the reader. Rather than use an image of firm solidification, Woolf suggests that language is mutable; the ‘integument’ is a substance that can transfer, but not necessarily assert, the writer’s meaning. This oscillation between solidity and disintegration also speaks directly to Woolf’s dialogic theory of textuality as an exchange between writer and reader. As Judith Allen suggests: ‘[Woolf] foreground[s] the interactions between reader and text, [...] including the complex interactions between the minds and the bodies of those involved.’<sup>2</sup> While this moment

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp. 122-23. All further references to this text are to this edition and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Allen, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 31.

in *Orlando* encourages Woolf's protagonist to reconsider her use of the present participle, the image of the 'integument' also resonates with the material dimensions of Woolf's own textual practices. In observing her writing, Leonard Woolf imagined a protective skin separating his wife from her embodied environment: '[S]he seemed usually, when writing, to acquire a protective skin or integument which insulated her from her surroundings.'<sup>3</sup> 'Insulated' rather than embedded, Leonard Woolf's description suggests a disconnection between Virginia Woolf and her material environment. But Woolf herself uses the image of the 'integument' as a means of conveying the interaction between the subject and their lived environment, and this she suggests, should form the basis of the modern novel. As she makes clear in 'Modern Fiction': '[L]ife is a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit [...]?'<sup>4</sup> Woolf suggests, here, that the everyday experience of 'life' can be captured and conveyed in the palpable forms of language. The 'innumerable atoms' that fall upon the 'ordinary mind' 'score' the consciousness just as the ink of a pen mark inscriptions upon a blank page ('MF', p. 9).

From the seeping ink of Mrs Flanders' letter at the opening of *Jacob's Room* (1922), to the blood-stained pages of Orlando's manuscript and prayer book, Woolf suggests that in reading and writing there is a transfer, or exchange, between the writer and the reader, and this is conditioned by the materiality of the printed work. For her, the text is not a static and unalterable artefact, but an artwork that invites an active participation in its aesthetic expression. Woolf's use of materials in her work (inks, paints, solid objects and flowers, for example) remind readers of the tangibility of literature, but they also convey the text's potential to transfer, impress or stain the mind of the reader. A passage from *The Waves* (1931) speaks directly to

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<sup>3</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All the Way* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), pp. 52-3.

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 8-12 (p. 9). All further references to Woolf's essay are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.



Woolf's theorisation of literature as a complex interchange of ideas. Imagining his future career as a novelist, Bernard wishes for a notebook to record his impulses for writing: 'Under B shall come "Butterfly Powder". If, in my novel, I describe the sun on the window-sill, I shall look under B and find butterfly powder. That will be useful'.<sup>5</sup> It is the effect of sunlight upon the windowsill that influences Bernard to describe, but rather than focus upon the light he uses a material image of transferal in order to convey it. Just as the butterfly leaves a trace of its presence upon the surfaces it interacts with, here Bernard's metaphor reflects Woolf's notion of the text as a material exchange. Although subtle in its impression, the butterfly's wing (a thin integument in its own right) conveys colour and the effect of light through the interaction of surface tensions. While this image brings to mind the softness of the flowers in *Kew Gardens* (1919), and the dancing lights that their petals reflect, it also echoes the act of printing as an embodied act of materialising literature, of making it real in the tangible substances of print.

This thesis argues that Woolf's experimental texts are conditioned by the literary materialism of both her writing processes and her work as a publisher at the Hogarth Press. By drawing on the field of print culture as well as the materialist turn in Woolf scholarship, it will interrogate how her embodied experience as a printer, book-designer and publisher, underlines her modernist aesthetics, and how the 'Woolifan moment' can be considered a materially embedded phenomenon conditioned by the palpability and ontological function of physical objects. While the role played by the Hogarth Press in the intellectual and literary innovations of modernism has been well-documented, less attention had been paid to the relationship between Woolf's role at the Press and her own literary experimentalism.<sup>6</sup> Her interest in literary materiality has not been thoroughly examined as a direct influence upon her art. As Alison

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<sup>5</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 27. All further references to Woolf's novel are to this edition and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Helen Southworth (ed.), *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Jeanne Dubino (ed.), *Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010); Nicola Wilson, 'Virginia Woolf, Hugh Walpole, the Hogarth Press, and the Book Society', *English Literary History*, 79.1 (2012), 237-260.

Howard notes: ‘Like many modernists, Woolf is often depicted as removed from the material interests of literature, focusing instead on [her] more sophisticated artistic commitments.’<sup>7</sup> This thesis challenges this assumption by arguing that Woolf’s interest in the physical substances of literature stems from her own writing circumstances, which shape her literary aesthetics. In doing so, it draws on the work of Derek Ryan who reads her texts as concerned with ‘various aspects of materialism and immanence rather than abstraction and transcendence’.<sup>8</sup> But by suggesting that Woolf’s work at the Press sensitised her to the visual aspects of the book and the significant role these play in its system of representation, this thesis also considers the extent to which materiality informs her engagement with Bloomsbury visual aesthetics, which often exaggerate the distinction between visual and verbal modes of communication. Through an engagement with the physical matter of Woolf’s fiction, her day-to-day writing practices, and the material conditions of her compositional processes between the years of 1917 to 1931, this thesis interrogates the relationship between Woolf’s materialist conversations with Bloomsbury formalism and her experimental literary and feminist aesthetics.

### **‘Solid Objects’: Feminism and Form**

The subjective act of observation provides the basis of her first experimental text at the Hogarth Press. ‘The Mark on the Wall’, printed in *Two Stories* in 1917, conveys the fluctuations of a thinking mind on an ‘ordinary’ day as the narrator considers a seemingly insignificant mark she notices upon her wall. The impression that the mark leaves upon the narrator generates what can be described as Woolf’s first narrative of interiority.<sup>9</sup> Questioning the very nature of the substance upon the wall, the text interrogates the relationship between subject and object, and

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<sup>7</sup> Alison Howard, ‘Dismantling the Modernist Myth: Samuel Beckett and Virginia Woolf in the Literary Marketplace’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 36.1 (Fall, 2012), 153-62 (158).

<sup>8</sup> Derek Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Andrew Thacker, ‘Uncompleted Life: The Modernist Underground’, in *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space and the Machine Ensemble*, ed. Matthew Beaumont and Michael J. Freeman (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 101-24 (p. 102).

also the temporality of thought: how the mind can flit from past to present to the future almost instantaneously. Woolf's narrator believes she can manipulate the inert mark, merely by thinking about it:

How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it... If that mark was left by a nail, it can't have been for a picture, it must have been for a miniature – the miniature of a lady with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks and lips like red carnations. A fraud of course, for the people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way – an old picture for an old room.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the narrator's stillness (she remains seated in an armchair throughout the narrative), Woolf presents the rapid movements of her thoughts as they 'swarm' upon the object without touching it. Through speculation, the mark produces various 'impressions' in the narrator's mind, and she attempts to fix the artefact with a firm definition. Yet her thoughts also move between the realms of fiction and fact, past and present, as she imagines a miniature of a woman dressed in archaic fashion ('an old picture for an old room'); through her engagement with a material artefact, she produces a fictional narrative about the previous occupants of the house. In the multitudinous nature of the narrator's observations, the variety of counter-narratives she produces about what the mark could be (or could have been), Woolf is able to undermine the authority of a single perspective. As she writes self-reflexively towards the end of 'The Mark on the Wall': '[t]he novelists in future will realise more and more the importance of these reflections, for there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number' (MW, p. 11).

Although 'Modern Fiction' has been characterised as the 'Woolfian manifesto',<sup>11</sup> in many ways 'The Mark on the Wall' also establishes the trajectory of Woolf's modernism and her interest in

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<sup>10</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'The Mark on the Wall', in *Two Stories* (London: Hogarth Press, 2017), pp. 1-23 (pp. 2-3). All further references to Woolf's short fiction are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>11</sup> As Rex Ferguson notes: "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" (1924) and "Modern Fiction" (1925), both often referred to as modernist manifestos, serve to illustrate the centrality of lost experience in the radical break performed by literary modernism.' Rex Ferguson, 'The Trials of Experience: From Enlightened Subjectivity to Woolfian Moments of Being', in *Criminal Law and the Modernist Novel: Experience on Trial* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 9-50 (p. 10). See also Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 189-93.

materiality: it enables her to experiment with the language of interiority, to undermine the authority of a single and conclusive narrative perspective, and also to test the ways in which physical materials influence and condition the subjective experience of everyday life.<sup>12</sup>

Woolf's engagement with materiality also provides the basis for her short story 'Solid Objects' from the collection *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), the third of her publications produced at the Hogarth Press. Although less experimental than 'The Mark on the Wall' in terms of narrative style, the fiction is useful in highlighting Woolf's literary engagement with physical matter. Echoing the black mark on the wall that induces the narrator's erratic reverie, the first image Woolf presents in 'Solid Objects' is that of a 'small black spot' moving across a beach.<sup>13</sup> Woolf's omniscient narrator focuses in on the mark until 'a certain tenuity in its blackness [signalled] that this spot possessed four legs; and moment by moment it became more unmistakable that it was composed of the persons of two young men' who, the narrative vaguely reveals, are in the midst of a heated argument ('SO', p. 102). The text refrains from revealing the cause or content of the dispute, and instead draws attention to the material markers that signify the identity of the two men:

[T]weed caps, rough boots, shooting coats, and the check stockings of the two speakers became clearer and clearer; the smoke of their pipes went up into the air; nothing was so solid, so living, so hard, red, hirsute and virile as these two bodies for miles and miles of sea and sandhill. ('SO', p. 102)

Although these particular items of clothing suggest male privilege and wealth (the text later reveals that both men are young politicians), Woolf does not centralise a thinking subject at the opening of her short fiction, choosing instead to foreground the materiality of clothing. She destabilises the centrality of human agency within this narrative (unlike 'The Mark on the Wall') and embeds the human form within the realm of palpable matter. In doing so, Woolf subverts the anthropocentric model of selfhood in 'Solid Objects' by expressing identity through material

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<sup>12</sup> 'The Mark on the Wall' is considered in further detail in chapter one.

<sup>13</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Solid Objects', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (New York and London: Harcourt, 1985), pp. 102-107 (p. 102). All further references to Woolf's fiction are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

possessions. The clothing worn by John and his companion also destabilise the notion of a coherent sense of self by undermining the boundary between the animate and the inanimate, between interiority and exteriority. The clothes in ‘Solid Objects’ act both as a concealment and an expression of selfhood to be read and interpreted. As R. S. Koppen notes:

The presence of sartorial items consistently invites a hermeneutic approach. [...] The effect is similar but not identical to the modern materialism practiced by the surrealist avant-garde, which strove to grant things – including clothes – their potency, cognizant of the work matter performs in moving, shaping and impinging on people.<sup>14</sup>

While the clothes in the short story reveal aspects of the subjects’ identities, particularly in terms of their social position, clothing in Woolf’s text also functions as barrier between the subject and their linguistic expression of interiority. She refrains from providing access to the unconscious in her narrative. Rather than consider the men’s clothing as an expression of self, Woolf’s decision reduces them solely to the world of matter.

In his essay, ‘The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism)’, Bill Brown highlights Woolf’s tendency to undermine the ‘coherence of familiarity’ in ‘Solid Objects’: ‘[T]he point is not that the familiar object has been defamiliarized into unreconstituted fragments (which is to say discrete, fragmented sensations) but rather that the literal fragments become objects without any of the coherence of familiarity we associate with objects.’<sup>15</sup> Rather than introduce the two human figures within her text as people, Woolf initially characterises the men as objects, and she reduces them to their body parts: the spot ‘possessed four legs,’ ‘tiny mouths,’ and ‘little round heads’ (‘SO’, p. 102). Initially defamiliarised and fragmented, the central subject of the fiction, John, only comes into being when he discovers a green ‘lump of glass’ buried beneath the sand (‘SO’, p. 103):

As his hand went further and further, down, down, into the sand. As his hand went further and further beyond the wrist, so that he had to hitch his sleeve a little higher, his eyes lost their intensity, or rather the background of thought and experience which gives an inscrutable depth to the eyes of grown people disappeared, leaving only the clear

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<sup>14</sup> R. S. Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 150.

<sup>15</sup> Bill Brown, ‘The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism)’, *Modernism/Modernity*, 6.2 (April, 1999), 1-28.

transparent surface, expressing nothing but wonder, which the young eyes of children display. [...] gradually [he] dislodged a large irregular lump, and brought it to the surface. When the sand coating was wiped off, a green tint appeared. ('SO', p. 103)

Here, the narrative further fragments the human body as it progresses. While the sand and the sleeve of John's shirt bisect his arm, his eyes become glazed, 'a clear transparent surface', not unlike the shard of glass that he finds beneath the sand.<sup>16</sup> Submerged and hidden from view, the glass is one of many discarded materials John's culture has chosen not to curate. Covered in sand, the glass has returned to and become part of the matter from which it had originally been made. Bringing it back to the surface, John makes the object new again by removing the sand that has dulled its vibrancy. His sight, initially tainted by the 'thought[s] and experience[s]' of his society, returns to a state of child-like wonder on discovering the glass.

The delight in the properties of physical objects brings to mind Roger Fry's 'An Essay in Aesthetics' (1909) in which he suggests that children take 'delightful freedom and sincerity' in their interactions with material artefacts, and these often inform the 'mental images that make up their imaginative lives'.<sup>17</sup> Woolf's text also invokes the work of Henri Bergson who places an emphasis on the visual aspects of the material world: 'Matter,' he suggests, 'in our view, is an aggregate of "images"'.<sup>18</sup> Challenging the humanist assumption that objects can only exist in the mind of human beings, Bergson maintains that objects are 'part and parcel of an existence really independent of our own. [...] The object exists in itself, and, on the other hand, the object is, in itself pictorial, as we perceive it: image it is, but a self-existing image.'<sup>19</sup> Woolf's short story reflects Bergson's theory concerning the thinking subject and her or his material environment by destabilising human agency in the interaction between animate and inert matter.

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<sup>16</sup> At the opening of *Orlando*, Woolf's depiction of Shakespeare bears many similarities to John's glazed look in 'Solid Objects'. Abstract and vacant, Shakespeare sits before Orlando in the kitchens at Knole, but is unable to see him. Orlando perceives that the writer's eyes are 'globed and clouded like some green stone of curious texture' (*O*, p. 16).

<sup>17</sup> Roger Fry, 'An Essay in Aesthetics', in *Vision and Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 12-27 (p. 15).

<sup>18</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen Unwin, 1911), p. xi.

<sup>19</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. xi-xiii.

Decentring the subject's imagination as an isolated source of creativity, in 'Solid Objects' the shard of glass generates multiple fictions that work to reinsert the discarded object within the narratives of history. At this point in the narrative Woolf foregrounds the way objects function to facilitate creativity. As John further examines the glass, he thinks about its possible origins and the people who may have interacted with it:

You had only to enclose it in a rim of gold, or pierce it with a wire, and it became a jewel; part of a necklace, or a dull, green light upon a finger. Perhaps after all it really was a gem; something worn by a dark Princess trailing her finger in the water as she sat in the stern of the boat and listened to the slaves singing as they rowed her across the Bay. Or the oak sides of a sunk Elizabethan treasure-chest had split apart, and, rolled over and over, over and over, its emeralds had come to the shore. John turned it in its hands; he held it to the light; he held it so that its irregular mass blotted out the body and extended the right arm of his friend. ('SO', p. 103)

John's engagement with the piece of glass influences him to think about other narratives that have been excluded from history. At the beginning of the story, both he and his companion George, are representatives of the British political establishment, but as a result of John's impulsive hoarding behaviour, he becomes increasingly isolated from his career as a politician. Rather than upholding the political discourses of his society, he finds alternative narratives through the collection of solid objects. In this passage, his reference to the 'dark Princess' and the 'slaves singing' point towards a colonial history, marginalised by imperialist narratives.<sup>20</sup> In moving the shard of glass, John is able to 'blot out' the domineering figure of George (whose very name brings to mind the British monarchy), and manipulate his form until he becomes not 'so definite an object' ('SO', p. 103). By bringing this material artefact to the surface, polishing it so that it can reflect light again, John has the potential to recover aspects of the past that have been submerged and forgotten.<sup>21</sup> Although the central subject of the fiction is male, the stories

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<sup>20</sup> The image of the 'dark Princess' at the stern of boat, with her finger cutting through the surface of the water, anticipates the position Cam Ramsay occupies as she travels to the lighthouse with Mr Ramsay and her brother, James. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 184. All further reference to this novel are to this edition and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>21</sup> Woolf's diaries reveal that she was particularly attracted to the visual properties of green glass. In 1918, after buying a green jar from a chemist 'for nothing', she notes in her diary: 'Glass is the best of all decorations, holding the light & changing it.' Virginia Woolf, *The Complete Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 1: 1915-1919*, ed.

that John composes about his artefacts often convey a distinctly female revision of history. Woolf also suggests here that the glass has the ability to undermine or manipulate dominant cultural discourses, to think about alternate perspectives and experiences, which reinforces Woolf's emphasis on the multitudinous lived experience of daily life. But the manipulation of light at this point in the text also speaks directly to Woolf's own feminist politics. Light, 'particularly its source, the sun', Jane Goldman suggests, 'is traditionally the province of the masculine, never the feminine.'<sup>22</sup> Woolf's manipulation of light in this text and others, such as *Kew Gardens* (1919), 'BLUE. & GREEN.' (1921) and *The Waves* (1931), exhibits her commitment to challenge, in Goldman's words, 'an oppressive solar masculinity which keeps the feminine in its shade as object.'<sup>23</sup> Woolf's manipulation of light in her fiction also counteracts what Alix Beeston describes as a 'monocular Cartesian perspectivalism', a single 'visual truth', by offering alternate perspectives to the overarching and dominant cultural narratives.<sup>24</sup>

There is, then, an underlying feminist agenda to Woolf's materialism in 'Solid Objects', but this aspect of the text has received little critical consideration amongst scholars.<sup>25</sup> While John's 'haunting' of 'waste land[s] between railway lines, sites of demolished houses, and commons' in search of broken china is strikingly odd, his interest in discarded materials is political in that he searches for alternative stories excluded from historical narratives. Woolf returns to this idea in *Orlando*, a text in which she uses material artefacts as a means of engaging with forgotten aspects of the past. In order to reclaim a lost female literary tradition, in this text Woolf demonstrates how residual traces of the past reside in everyday materialism. In thinking

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Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), p. 170. All further references to Woolf's diary are to this edition and volume and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Goldman, *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Alix Beeston, *In and Out of Sight: Modernist Writing and the Photographic Unseen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> As Brown notes: 'The story has hardly fascinated Woolf's readers who have been far more captivated by the life of the subject, the fate of individuality, and the vicissitudes of consciousness in her fiction.' Brown, 'The Secret Life of Things', p. 4.



and reading in the spaces of his ancestral home, Orlando is able to materialise and ‘make real’ neglected histories. At this point in the narrative, the biographer blurs the distinction between the subject and the text as Orlando reads his life as if it is recorded on paper:

[T]here was no time for the smoothing out and deciphering of those thickly scored parchments which thirty years among men and women had rolled tight in his heart and brain. [...] What made the process still longer was that it was profusely illustrated. [...] And so, the thought of love would be all ambered over with snow and winter; with log fires burning; with Russian women, gold swords, and the bark of stags; [...]. Every single thing, once he tried to dislodge it from its place in his mind, he found thus cumbered with other matter like the lump of glass which, after a year at the bottom of the sea, is grown about with bones, and dragon-flies, and coins and the tresses of drowned women. (O, p. 69)

Reading the scores and illustrations that compose the story of his own life, he recalls several prominent scenes and images from his past. Woolf conceptualises memory in literary, visual, and also material terms. Just as the Great Frost at the opening of *Orlando* can be read as a metaphor for historization, here Orlando’s own history, which is solidified in his memory, is also conveyed in the material image of sea-glass and amber. But the things that Orlando recalls here are not solely related to himself and his experiences ‘dislodged from his mind’, the memories are ‘cumbered with other matter’, which also suggests that memory is collective and not formed in isolation. Like John in ‘Solid Objects’, Orlando’s engagement with the past recollects disparaged materials (significantly the ‘tresses of drowned women’) that are submerged beneath the historical narratives that exclude them. What both these instances reveal is the fact that Woolf’s literary and aesthetic interest in materiality is intricately connected to her feminist politics, and that her use of material objects within her fictions point towards alternative stories cast in the shade of British imperialist discourses.

In many ways, Woolf’s engagement with materiality in these texts anticipate a recent critical turn in cultural materialism that aims to undermine the distinction between ‘inert’ matter and ‘vibrant’ life. Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter* (2010) argues for a reconsideration of the function of lifeless material in our understanding of political and cultural narratives of consumption and exchange. She argues that ‘the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized

matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption. It does so by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies.<sup>26</sup> In her characterisation of John in ‘Solid Objects’, Woolf demonstrates her own understanding of what Bennett describes (in a particularly Woolfian manner) as ‘the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us, [...] the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies’, which are brought about in the use and communal re-use of physical matter.<sup>27</sup> Aspects of this quotation resonate profoundly with Woolf’s ideas about materialism and writing. The ‘impersonal life,’ for example, echoes Woolf’s concept of the ‘integument’, the ‘semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end’ (‘MF’, p. 9).<sup>28</sup> If the integument of the ‘semi-transparent envelope’ is read as a material covering of consciousness, Woolf suggests, this cannot be read as distinct from the materiality of everyday life. Woolf’s literary materialism, then, is underlined by three important factors of particular importance to the argument of this thesis: firstly, she suggests that material objects form the sensory basis of the perceived environment, through colour and form, touch, smell and taste; secondly, that physical artefacts record daily life and the art of living within a specific temporal moment; and thirdly, that an engagement with materiality, for Woolf and for many of her fictional artists and writers, facilitates the production of their art.

While ‘Solid Objects’ outlines the relationship between Woolf’s interest in matter and her feminist politics, it also establishes a connection between these aspects of her work and Bloomsbury visual aesthetics. In its suggestion of a dynamic interaction between the subject and

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<sup>26</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. ix.

<sup>27</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Bennett’s idea of a material ‘web of connections’ also reflects Woolf’s feminist commentary on literary production in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929): ‘[F]iction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners[.]’ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 32. All further references to Woolf’s text are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

matter, the text invokes Fry's concept of 'pure vision', which he outlines in 'An Essay in Aesthetics'. Here Fry suggests that for the thinking subject there are two modes of comprehension: that of the 'actual life' and that of the 'imagined life'.<sup>29</sup> For him, the 'graphic arts are an expression of the imaginative life rather than a copy of the actual life' and when objects lose their functional 'necessity' they become works of art:<sup>30</sup>

It is only when an object exists in our lives for no other purpose than to be seen that we really look at it, as for instance at a China ornament or a precious stone, and towards such even the most normal person adopts to some extent the artistic attitude of pure vision abstracted from necessity.<sup>31</sup>

Echoing the work of Fry, the objects that Woolf foregrounds in 'Solid Objects' speak directly to this essay, which suggests a dialogue between Woolf and Fry's ideas about materialism in this fiction. Fry's concept of 'pure vision,' however, bestows little agency upon the subject, the 'normal person' who perceives the object. In 'Solid Objects', Woolf furthers his theory by enacting an interplay between John's abstract thought and the physical matter of the objects he curates. She uses this short fiction to demonstrate that creativity is not abstracted from the everyday uses of physical artefacts. Rather for her, the subject's interactions with their perceived and material environment provides the basis of art.

### **Post-Impressionism: A Language of Form and Colour**

As this thesis explores, Woolf's engagement with painting and the decorative arts directly influenced her thinking about the materiality of literary production, as well as her use of visual tropes, such as colour and form, in her writing. Throughout her career, Woolf experimented with the effects of the graphic arts in her work: she interrogated the relationship between the 'sister arts' of painting and literature and sought for a collaborative and interdisciplinary conversation between the two modes of communication. This demonstrates her search for a

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<sup>29</sup> Roger Fry, 'An Essay in Aesthetics', p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Fry, *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Fry, *ibid.*, p. 18.

parallel between the embodied experience of writing and painting. She even imitated the stance of a painter while writing at her easel-like desk.<sup>32</sup> Despite this, she often articulated a sense of isolation from the ‘silent land’ of the visual artist. Woolf deliberates the distinction between literature and painting explicitly in her essay *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* (1934), in which she writes: ‘[T]here is a zone of silence in the middle of every art. The artists themselves live in it.’<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in her ‘Foreword to Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell’ (1930), she draws attention to the tantalising muteness of her sister’s work, which she suggests ‘has no truck with words’:<sup>34</sup>

It is Mrs Bell who is determined that we shall not loll about juggling with pretty words or dallying with delicious sensations. There is something uncompromising about her art. [...] No stories are told; no insinuations are made. The hillside is bare; the group of women is silent; the little boy stands in the sea saying nothing. If portraits there are, they are pictures of flesh which happens from its texture or its modelling to be aesthetically [*sic.*] on an equality with the China pot or the chrysanthemum. (‘FVB’, pp. 138-139)

For Woolf, the taciturnity of paint signifies the greatest distinction between art and literature, but she suggests that the same emotional responses can be encouraged by both. Here, in her analysis of Bell’s painting, her language is restrained and minimalist. Without the addition of ‘pretty words’, Woolf’s introverted sentences convey the same forlorn quietness of the landscape, the silence of the women, and the isolation of the little boy.<sup>35</sup> Woolf’s introduction, however, positions ‘Mrs Bell’ as the ‘determined’ and ‘uncompromising’ enforcer of this silence, and she trivialises language as an unnecessary adornment to paint. While Grace Brockington suggests that, in this ‘Foreword’, her ‘words hammer against Bell’s silence, each clause a new sentence, a

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<sup>32</sup> See J. H. Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers: The Hogarth Press, 1917-1941* (Charlottesville and London: University of Charlottesville Press, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘Walter Sickert: A Conversation’, in *The Complete Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 6, 1933-1941*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2011), pp. 36-64 (p. 39). All further references to Woolf’s essays are to this edition and volume and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>34</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘Foreword to Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell’, in *The Complete Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 5: 1929-1932*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2009), pp. 137-142 (p. 139). All further references to Woolf’s essay are to this edition and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>35</sup> In the foreword, Woolf does not clarify which painting by Bell she is referring to here.

separate blow', Woolf's exaggeration of Bell's silence is comedic rather than accusatory.<sup>36</sup> Pitting silence against speech and the artist against the writer, her textual strategy in the 'Foreword' is to undermine these distinctions, and this she achieves in her use of the term 'sensation'. Given its significance in early twentieth-century aesthetic discourses to describe the impulses felt by the artist to paint, here Woolf appropriates the term and uses it to foreground the linguistic responses to visual art. Paul Cézanne was famous for his use of the term 'sensation' when describing his work. In conversation with Émile Bernard, he argues that 'sensation' is a 'personal apperception' and that the 'intellect [...] should organise these sensations into a work of art.'<sup>37</sup> The idea that the impulses of the individual facilitate art also forms the basis of Roger Fry's concept of the 'aesthetic emotion'.<sup>38</sup> In 'An Essay in Aesthetics', Fry suggests: '[W]hen we come to the higher works of art, where sensations are so arranged that they arouse in us deep emotions, this feeling of a special tie with the man who expressed them becomes very strong. We feel that he has expressed something which was latent in us all the time[.]'<sup>39</sup> Both Fry and Cézanne's ideas suggest that behind the unresponsive façade of the painting is a thinking subject, the artist, whose linguistic consciousness forms the basis of their silent art.

This idea, as chapter five of this thesis considers, influenced Woolf's portrayal of Lily Briscoe's painting process in *To the Lighthouse* (1927). But in her 'Foreword' to her sister's exhibition, Woolf explicitly draws a parallel between language and 'sensation'. Suggesting that 'words' and 'sensations' are exterior to her sister's art, Woolf challenges Fry's assumption that a painting contains and presents the artist's 'aesthetic emotion' through the arrangement of 'sensation' on the canvas. For Woolf, the viewer's linguistic response to a work of art is not

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<sup>36</sup> Grace Brockington, 'A "Lavender Talent" or "The Most Important Woman Painter in Europe"?' Reassessing Vanessa Bell', *Art History*, 36.1 (February 2013), 128-53 (133).

<sup>37</sup> Paul Cézanne, quoted in Richard Kendall (ed.) *Cézanne by Himself: Drawings, Paintings, Writings* (London: Macdonald Orbis, 1988), p. 289.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony Uhlmann considers the interrelation between Cézanne, Fry and Woolf's use of the term sensation in greater detail. Uhlmann, 'Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury Aesthetics', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 58-73.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Fry, 'An Essay in Aesthetics', p. 21.

conditioned by the artist's personal 'emotion' or, as Fry suggests, an 'identification' between the (male) viewer and the (male) artist. In his conceptualisation of visual art, the painter and the viewer must undergo a process of identification, and this reinforces textual authority on the part of the creator. The artist's presence in their work is problematic in the context of Woolf's feminism. Famously, in *A Room of One's Own*, she considers how the male assertion of self, in the use of the letter 'T', casts the female subject into shadow (*AROO*, p. 130). In her own review of *Vision and Design* (1920), Woolf addresses this issue by comparing art to literature. Thinking about Milton's *Lycidas* (1638), she writes:

As for a feeling of sympathy with Milton himself, that, in my own case, is practically non-existent. As I read 'Lycidas' I have no vision of Milton [...] The words might have been written by Anon. Nor do they wake in me any consciousness of personal experience.<sup>40</sup>

Woolf's decision to comment upon the work of a man who was notoriously cruel to his daughters, who thought it 'unnecessary' for women to be taught to write, fits with her aim to undermine the authority of the writer in the assertion of their name upon the pages of their work.<sup>41</sup> She would rather the words to have been written by 'Anon', who in *A Room of One's Own* she positions as female (*AROO*, p. 63). Woolf's review of *Vision and Design* demonstrates her conceptualisation of art, both literary and visual, as a complex and shared process. Rather than foregrounding the influence of the author in the textual creation of meaning, in this instance Woolf prefers not to think about Milton in her reading of his work. She anonymises his poem, which enables her to make her own critical judgements. For Woolf, textuality is a complex exchange of information, in which the 'aesthetic outcome' is produced by both the artist and the recipient of that art simultaneously.<sup>42</sup> The subject's dialogic engagement with a work of art allows for a freer and less restrictive theorisation of aesthetics. What Woolf's review reveals, then, is the

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<sup>40</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Vision and Design' in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 6, 1933-1941*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2011), pp. 387-391 (p. 389). This essay was first published in *The Woman's Leader* in February 1921. All further references to Woolf's review are to this edition and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>41</sup> John Milton quoted in Barbara K. Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 408.

<sup>42</sup> The conclusion of this thesis returns to this idea in a discussion of Woolf's 'Anon'.

way in which her engagement with Fry's work enables us to read how her feminist politics often underline her conversations with Bloomsbury painting and aesthetics.

Removing the painter from their art is, Woolf suggests, particularly liberating for the woman artist, and she uses her 'Foreword' to Vanessa Bell's exhibition to further unravel gendered preconceptions about women and their work. Although Bell never identified with the Women's Movement, Woolf often draws attention to her sister's significance as a radical and experimental woman artist. In the foreword to her exhibition in 1930, Woolf uses spatial metaphors to demonstrate the significance of her work,<sup>43</sup> which she suggests stands upon the threshold of a new age for women painters:

Mrs Bell has a certain reputation it cannot be denied. She is a woman, it is said, yet she has looked on nakedness with a brush in her hand. She is reported (one has read it in the newspapers) to be "the most considerable painter of her own sex now alive". Berthe Morisot, Marie Laurencin, Vanessa Bell [...]. For whatever the phrase may mean, it must mean that her pictures stand for something, are something and will be something which we shall disregard at our peril. As soon not to go to see them as shut the window when the nightingale is singing. ('FVB', p. 138)

Characterising herself as a passing onlooker, Woolf's narrator mocks assumptions the viewer may have about 'Mrs Bell,' which centre around her gender and appearance: 'Is she dainty, then, or austere? Does she like riding? Is she red-haired or brown eyed?' ('FVB', p. 139). Trivialising these questions, Woolf demonstrates their irrelevance for the viewer, who she suggests should appreciate Bell's art for 'her vision [which] excites a strong emotion' ('FVB', p. 139). In contrast to Fry's assertion that the (male) artist can be found in his work, here Woolf's distancing of her sister from her art work is a feminist strategy that enables her to centralise Bell's artistic merit rather than the details of her biography.

Choosing not to display an insightful knowledge of Vanessa Bell, the narrator purposely emphasises a sense of mystery in Bell's work: her paintings 'yield their full meaning only to those

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<sup>43</sup> Maggie Humm suggests: 'The visual textuality in essays about her sister's art encourages Woolf away from the interrogative self to one of self-presence [...]. The essay is shaped by spatial metaphors [...]. The room is not static but engenders the visual force of each painting[.]' Humm, 'Woolf and the Visual', in *A Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jessica Berman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), pp. 291-304 (p. 299).

who can tunnel their way behind the canvas into masses and passages and relations and values of which we know nothing' ('FVB', p. 139). As chapters one, four and five demonstrate, Woolf's engagement with the visual arts, particularly with Bell's Post-Impressionism, are invoked in her writing practices, and her conversations with visual aesthetics are often bound with her materialist-feminism. Blurring the margins between literature and art, Woolf often uses painterly effects as a feminist practice. As Goldman demonstrates: 'Woolf's ideas on colour and writing [are mirrored] in the connections made in contemporary reviews of Post-Impressionism between the shocking colours and depiction of women in the paintings, and the colours of the women's suffrage movement.'<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Lorraine Sim highlights Woolf's concern with the political experience of colour and the 'cultural and aesthetic transformations' that 'might alter society's experience of colour.'<sup>45</sup> This thesis similarly interrogates the interrelation between the visual arts and Woolf's feminism, but it does so by deploying a materialist approach in order to further understand the significance of colours, form, and material objects in her texts in readings of her politics.

Woolf's 1930 'Foreword' also displays a particular concern for the materiality of Vanessa Bell's paintings. There is a corporeality suggested in Woolf's descriptions of the paintings. Bell's portraits are 'pictures of flesh', but she also compares them to the physical shape of everyday artefacts: 'from its texture or its modelling' the picture is in 'equality with the China pot or the chrysanthemum' ('FVB', p. 139). While Woolf's comparison between the body and everyday materialism brings to mind her earlier ambiguation of the subject and material objects in 'Solid Objects', it also speaks directly to Clive Bell's theory of 'significant form': the idea that the formal structures conveyed in painting, sculpture and material artefacts can be expressive even if they are removed from their original context or their ontological purpose.<sup>46</sup> But Woolf's parallel also points towards Vanessa Bell's decorative work in the domestic spaces of her home at

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<sup>44</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> Lorraine Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Heinemann, 1917), p. 10.



Charleston.<sup>47</sup> Painting the walls, mantelpieces, and furniture along with her co-habiter Duncan Grant, Bell worked to enhance the sensorial experience of her art by aligning it with the domestic and the everyday, even at a time when twentieth-century modernism, as Christopher Reed suggests, ‘grew increasingly anti-domestic’.<sup>48</sup> For both Bell and Woolf, domestic spaces were a place of intense, and often industrious, creativity, and Bell’s paintings of domestic scenes often portray acts of creativity, such as writing, reading, painting and conversing.<sup>49</sup> Open books and figures in mid-conversation are also often included in her work, which demonstrate her own acknowledgement of language in her silent medium of paint.<sup>50</sup> For Bell also thought about her own art in terms of words, as she reveals in a letter to her son Julian in January 1936:

I think we have learnt largely from the Chinese not simply to represent actual appearances, but to try and convey the spirit of movement, character, rhythm etc., [...] it remains it seems to me always the *visual* relationship that is important in painting. There is a language simply of form and colour that can be quite as moving as any other and that seems to affect one quite as much as the greatest poetry of words. (emphasis in original)<sup>51</sup>

Rather than considering painting a static medium, Bell understands that sequential movement and even character can be implied in art. For, her the language of painting is that of ‘form and colour’, but like poetry paint can be ‘quite as moving’.

A letter to Woolf after she read *The Waves* (1931), also demonstrates an overlapping sensibility between Bell’s work and that of her sister:

I have been for the last 3 days completely submerged in *The Waves* [*sic.*] – and am left rather gasping, out of breath, choking, half-drowned, as you might expect. [...] Will it seem to you absurd and conceited or will you understand at all what I mean if I tell you I’ve been working hard lately at an absurd great picture [...] it seems to me it would have some analogous meaning to what you’ve done. (*VBL*, p. 367)<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Woolf could be referring to Bell’s 1920 composition *Chrysanthemums*, in which the flowers are painted in a China jug.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Reed, ‘Domestic Modernism’, in *Vanessa Bell*, ed. Sarah Milroy and Ian A.C. Dejardin (London and New York: Philip Wilson, 2017), pp. 133-36 (p. 133).

<sup>49</sup> Sarah Milroy and Ian A.C. Dejardin (eds.), *Vanessa Bell* (London and New York: Philip Wilson, 2017), p. 121.

<sup>50</sup> See for example: *Interior with the Artist’s Daughter* (1935-6), *Study for Portrait of Leonard Sidney Woolf* (1938), *A Conversation* (1913-16).

<sup>51</sup> Vanessa Bell, *Selected Letters*, ed. Regina Marler (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), p. 406. All further references to Bell’s letters are to this edition and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>52</sup> The painting Bell is referring to is a painting of a domestic scene, titled *The Nursery*, which was lost during an incendiary bomb attack in 1940.

Nuala Hancock's research into the houses of both Bell and Woolf similarly foregrounds the interrelation between the sister's creative work and their domestic spaces:

Dwelling and painting, for Vanessa Bell, are expressed as processes of material layering, the creation of secondary skins [...]. Writing and dwelling for Virginia Woolf are expressed as filmy integuments [...]. Bounded and boundlessness are continuously enacted in Woolf's and Bell's exchange as both registers of aesthetic expression.<sup>53</sup>

Bringing to mind Woolf's image of the 'integument', Hancock's attention to the 'material layering' of language and paint suggests a fragility between borders and boundaries. Woolf's conceptualisation of textuality, through her literary materiality and her literary aesthetics, similarly undermines distinctions between visual and verbal representation, between the 'aesthetic emotion' and the 'literary sensation'. By considering Woolf's textual practices, her embodied experience of producing literature, through writing, printing, and binding her literary works, this thesis draws a connection between her literary materiality and her feminist politics. In doing so, it offers new ways of thinking about both Woolf's writings and her politics in dialogue with the material and aesthetic innovations of the early twentieth century, particularly that of Bloomsbury culture, and especially with the work of Vanessa Bell.

### **The Hogarth Press and The Omega Workshops**

Although she has been marginalised in critical discourses concerning the innovations of Bloomsbury art,<sup>54</sup> Vanessa Bell's decorative and domestic work greatly influenced the development of the Omega Workshops, which were established by Roger Fry in 1913. Created with the intention of domesticating high art, the company produced various artefacts, such as furniture, upholstery, clothing and books. Blurring the divide between the public and private spaces of art, the home and the art gallery, the Omega Workshops sought to draw attention to

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<sup>53</sup> Nuala Hancock, *Charleston and Monk's House: The Intimate House Museums of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 172.

<sup>54</sup> In her reassessment of Vanessa Bell's work in 2013, Brockington notes 'there is no [critical] consensus that [Bell] was ever any good[.]' Brockington, 'A "Lavender Talent" of "The Most Important Woman Painter in Europe"?' Reassessing Vanessa Bell', 128.

the aesthetics of ontological and everyday artefacts, which could be bought and displayed at home. Resisting the mechanised precision of mass production, the enterprise placed an emphasis on crafting by hand; as Hancock notes: ‘The liveliness of the application of paint is palpable on the walls at Charleston. Vanessa Bell’s daughter bears witness to the process of painting directly on to the pink plaster walls, applying transparent layers of colour, such that the brush strokes were permanently recorded.’<sup>55</sup> Hancock’s interest in the ‘corporeality’ of material artefacts, and the way in which objects can be read in biographical terms, informs this thesis’s engagement with the materiality of Woolf’s texts, in both print and holographic versions.<sup>56</sup> However, while Hancock emphasises a distinction between the study of literature and the analysis of materials,<sup>57</sup> this thesis demonstrates how the phenomenology of texts can provide an insight into the conditions that facilitated their production. Considering the genesis of her texts by engaging with the materiality of Woolf’s writing process, this thesis also reveals how the visual materiality of her manuscripts informed her literary aesthetics, as well as the printing and production of her works. While genetic criticism is a useful methodology for tracing the transmission of textual production,<sup>58</sup> this thesis adopts a literary materialist approach more in line with that of book historians, which as Robert Darnton explains, focuses on ‘books as material objects’ and places an emphasis on the ‘experience of reading’.<sup>59</sup> Although book historians in their consideration of

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<sup>55</sup> Hancock, *Charleston and Monk’s House*, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup> Hancock, *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Hancock writes: ‘Different in substance from research carried out through the medium of texts, where the surrounding context plays merely an accommodating role, field work contextualises a study geographically, inviting analysis not only of the materials and contents of study, but of the nature of the spatial experience itself.’ Hancock, *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> The introduction to *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* (2004) establishes the principles of genetic criticism: ‘It grows out of a structuralist and poststructuralist notion of the “text” as an infinite play of signs, but it accepts a teleological model of textuality and constantly confronts the question of authorship. Like old-fashioned philology or textual criticism, it examines tangible documents such as writer’s notes, drafts and proof corrections, but its real object is much more abstract – not the existing documents but the movement of writing that must be inferred from them. Then, too, it remains concrete, for it never posits an ideal text beyond those documents but rather strives to reconstruct, from all the available evidence, the chain of events in a writing process.’ Distancing the text from its material origins, genetic criticism’s emphasis on the movement of writing undermines literature as a physical form of art. Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer and Michael Groden, ‘Introduction’, in *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 1-16 (p. 2).

<sup>59</sup> Robert Darnton, ‘What is the History of Books?’, *Daedalus*, 111.3 (1982), 65-83 (65-66).

literary materiality often consider the ‘economic circumstances that influence a work of literature,’ such as the relationship between authors, printers, editors, publishing houses and readers, this thesis examines how Woolf’s profession as a printer and publisher at the Hogarth Press enabled her to situate her fiction within the context of twentieth-century visual, political and material cultures.<sup>60</sup>

While the personal and professional relationship between Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell has been well documented by Diane F. Gillespie (1988), Jane Dunn (1990), Frances Spalding (1983) and Jane Goldman (1998),<sup>61</sup> this thesis considers how Woolf’s embodied experience of hand printing and book-design enabled her to identify her fiction with the paintings of contemporary visual artists, and position her work as a material art form in an age of increasing literary commercialisation. While Gillespie considers how the sister’s ‘mutual curiosity about each other’s creative process’ led to their collaboration as book designers at the Hogarth Press, this thesis considers how the texts and paratexts created by the sisters converse with and reflect each other.<sup>62</sup> Although attention has been paid to the professional collaboration between Bell and Woolf, the interdisciplinary relationship between their work has received less attention. Hermione Lee, for example, considers Bell’s works as ‘impressionistic and decorative rather than explanatory’; for her, they give Woolf’s work ‘a sympathetic atmosphere – feminine, imaginative, delicate, modern, and domestic.’<sup>63</sup> Rather than considering Bell’s dust-jackets as little more than a ‘visual underscoring’, as Gillespie suggests, the thesis will suggest a continuity between Woolf’s writing and Bell’s designs, and a shared vision in terms of their aesthetics.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> John Lurz, *The Death of the Book: Modernist Novels and the Time of Reading* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Diane F. Gillespie, *The Sisters’ Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988); Jane Dunn, *Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: A Very Close Conspiracy* (London: Virago, 1990); Frances Spalding, *Vanessa Bell* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983); Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf* (1998).

<sup>62</sup> Diane Gillespie, ‘Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Painting’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 121-39 (p. 122).

<sup>63</sup> Lee, *Virginia Woolf* p. 369.

<sup>64</sup> Gillespie, ‘Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Painting’, p. 161.

Woolf's work at the Hogarth Press encouraged her to think about literature as a physical and palpable form of art. Intended as a hobby to alleviate the stresses of writing and reviewing, the Press came to dominate her life between the years 1917-1938. Like the Omega Workshops, it was initially established as a domestic enterprise (the Woolfs at first used their kitchen table as a desk for printing), but it grew into a highly successful small publishing house, which is still in operation today.<sup>65</sup> Work at the press during Woolf's lifetime has received increasing attention in the past decade, with the centenary of its establishment forming the basis of the *Twenty-Seventh International Conference on Virginia Woolf: Virginia Woolf and the World of Books*, held at the University of Reading in June 2017. Similarly, Helen Southworth's edited collection *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism* (2010) attempts to trace the role of the Press in the production of literary modernism. In her introduction to the collection, Southworth emphasises the Woolfs' competence as commercial publishers and she 'makes a case for a network approach, a focus on links, connections and intersecting spheres [...] as a fruitful new way in which to study the modernist/small press.'<sup>66</sup> Southworth moves away, however, from the definition of the Hogarth Press as dominated by Bloomsbury artists in order to evaluate the 'Woolfs' contributions to the making of modernism.<sup>67</sup> This suggests, however, that Bloomsbury artists were not a central component of modernist literary and cultural production, which in turn reinforces a tendency to characterise them as elitist and remote.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, while Southworth dismisses the early productions of the Hogarth Press as 'limited' and 'amateur,' this thesis situates these early works as central to understanding Woolf's materialist and literary aesthetics. Sensitising her to the practical application of print, Woolf's literary and visual work at the Hogarth Press is inflected by her engagement with Bloomsbury materialist culture, but it also

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<sup>65</sup> For more on this see J. H. Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers: 1917-1941* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> Helen Southworth, 'Introduction', in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*, ed. Helen Southworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 1-26 (p. 3).

<sup>67</sup> Southworth, 'Introduction', p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Lives of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 431.

offers new ways of thinking about subjectivity and perception, about the relation of subject to material reality, in her novels and her other fictional work.

For Woolf, writing enabled her to ‘make real’ her thoughts about the nature of fiction and reality. As she articulates in ‘[A] Sketch of the Past’:

And so I go on to suppose that the shock receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not as I thought as a child, simply a blow from a hidden enemy behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind the appearances and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole[.]<sup>69</sup>

These ‘moments of being’, as Woolf describes them, at first seem dislocated from everyday life; they are ‘behind the cotton wool of daily life’, and some ‘token’ of the ‘real thing’ that lies beneath ‘appearances’. As Sim notes, these moments are ‘experiences of existential crisis and incomprehension’, but in writing ‘the fragments of the moment become [for Woolf] coherent and whole.’<sup>70</sup> While the Woolfian moment has often been characterised as something extemporal and abstract, in actuality it is generated from an engagement with the materiality of daily life. Just like the narrator in ‘The Mark on the Wall’ and the figure of John in ‘Solid Objects’, Woolf’s fictions are formed through an interaction with the physical artefacts of her everyday reality. Bryony Randall draws attention to this in *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*, where she writes: ‘Woolf’s “moment of being”, far from being a unified, self-sufficient, self-explanatory temporal unit, participates in what might be called a structure of supplementarity; [...] like Orlando’s manuscript [it] “want[s] to be read”, reflected upon, explained.’<sup>71</sup> Placing these moments of intensity into language, Woolf is able to turn her impulses into something palpable that can be examined in the processes of reading. As Ryan notes: ‘It may be that it is only

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<sup>69</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘[A] Sketch of the Past’, in *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002), pp. 78-160 (p. 85). All further references to Woolf text are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>70</sup> Sim, *Virginia Woolf and the Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, p. 159.

<sup>71</sup> Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 157.

through the human act of writing down [...] that Woolf feels she can “make it whole” and find “satisfaction” and “reason”.<sup>72</sup> The Woolfian moment, then, is underlined by an engagement with everyday materialism; Woolf’s sensorial interaction with her environment (the sound of the waves at night in childhood, for example) produces an overwhelming and lasting experience, or sensation, which can be translated into the textures of language.<sup>73</sup>

There is also a distinctly visual aspect to the Woolfian ‘moment of being.’ In remembering her childhood at St. Ives, she aims to ‘fix’ her mind upon the impressions of the past, and she uses a painterly analogy in order to achieve this:

If I were a painter I should paint these first impressions in pale yellow, silver and green. There was the pale yellow blind; the green sea; and the silver of the passion flowers. I should make a picture that was globular; semi-transparent. I should make a picture of curved petals; of shells; of things that were semi-transparent; I should make curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline. Everything would be large and dim; and what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf – sounds indistinguishable from sight. (‘SP’, pp. 79-80)

Colours offer the first impressions Woolf notes in her recollection, and each colour presented here is attached to an object: the blind, the sea, and the passion flowers. As soon as these items are recalled, Woolf intends to manipulate these ‘impressions’ into a new form of art in order to solidify and make permanent her memory of childhood. This desire to create visual art parallels the ‘impulses’ that make her a writer, suggesting that for Woolf both forms of art are able to achieve the same effects. What she attempts to recapture in art are the sensations that underline the moment being recollected. Colour is also the catalyst for these experiences; what Woolf claims is her very first memory, is closely associated with the colour of her mother’s dress: “This [memory] was of red and purples on a black ground [*sic.*] – my mother’s dress; and she was sitting either in a train or in an omnibus, and I was on her lap. I [...] can still see purple, red and

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<sup>72</sup> Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> In ‘[A] Sketch of the Past’, Woolf writes: ‘If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills – then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St Ives. It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive.’ (‘SP’, p. 79)

blue, I think, against the black' ('SP', p. 78). The foregrounding of colour in these significant 'moments of being', and the close association between colour and material (here her mother's dress) exposes another thread within Woolf's materialism: her conversations with the visual arts in her writing, and her literary use of colour. This thesis suggests that both are greatly influenced by her engagement with the materiality of her writing process and her work at the Hogarth Press.

The first chapter of this thesis turns its attention to the formation of the Press, and Woolf's early work as a hand printer and book designer. It begins by considering Woolf's early bookbinding practices as an adolescent, and how these skills were developed alongside her early career as a writer and reviewer. It shows how, even at this nascent stage in her career, Woolf considered her book-designs experimental, and in her letters she criticises the conservative aesthetics of what she terms the 'ordinary lidders' of publishing houses.<sup>74</sup> By drawing attention to her unusual (and somewhat destructive) bookbinding practices, this chapter suggests a continuity between Woolf's early experiments in the art of bookbinding and her work at the Hogarth Press, which sought to characterise itself in opposition to the ostentatious aesthetics of Arts and Crafts publishers, such as William Morris at the Kelmscott Press. Highlighting Woolf's fascination with the visual aspects of the printing, it explores the ways she came to think about the book as a visual and verbal form of art within the context of Bloomsbury visual culture. While Roger Fry's Omega Workshops have been characterised as a precursor to the Hogarth Press, this chapter suggests Woolf's own creative experimentation during the early years of the press influenced the design and development of the Omega Workshops' publication *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (1918). In doing so, it aims to reconsider the position of the Hogarth Press within Bloomsbury culture by situating it at the centre of modernist aesthetic innovation. The chapter takes as its focus two of Woolf's short fictions produced during the early years of the Press: 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917) and *Kew Gardens* (1919). Emphasising the multimodality of these texts,

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<sup>74</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Complete Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume I*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), p. 56. All further references to Woolf's letters are to this edition and volume and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.



the chapter demonstrates how word and image work in synthesis as a means of challenging the fixity of print.

While the first chapter focuses on the paratextual aspects of Woolf's short fictions, the second will turn its attention to the composition of her first novel at the Hogarth Press: *Jacob's Room* (1922). In conversation with the previous chapter, it considers how the disjointed form of the novel owes its origin to Woolf's experimentation with the short story during the early years of the Press. The text has frequently been described as 'cubist' by various critics, but this chapter turns to the manuscript draft to examine how Woolf generated the unconventional and fragmentary form of her novel.<sup>75</sup> Suggesting that each fragment of the novel can be read as a distinct entity, as a short fiction in itself, the chapter proposes that these fragments are unified by the circulation of material artefacts throughout the narrative, such as letters, photographs, paintings, books and clothing. The chapter also examines the disjointed nature of the manuscript, which anticipates the printing and production of the first Hogarth Press edition of the text. It highlights the way Woolf's practices as a hand-printer and publisher inform the composition of her draft material, particularly in terms of the section breaks that distinguish one passage of text from another. In doing so, it argues that Woolf was thinking about the *mise-en-page* of her printed novel at the early stages of writing. The interrelation between text and *avant-texte* can be observed at various stages in the manuscript, and the three volumes of the draft appear as almost complete textual entities. While Woolf made very few editorial changes to the manuscript prior to publication, she also presents her draft material in Hogarth Press bindings. Despite the formality of the manuscript's façade, the chapter also exposes an unusual writing strategy Woolf deployed while writing *Jacob's Room*: her use of self-criticism to comment upon the progression of her writing in her draft material. Woolf interlaces her own commentary on the narrative with the composition of the text itself. Blurring the boundary between text and

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<sup>75</sup> See, for example, David Sherman, *In a Strange Room: Modernism's Corpses and Mortal Obligation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 105.

metatext, Woolf's manuscript raises questions about the interactions between differing modes of writing in the stages prior to publication.

The third chapter of this thesis is concerned with the composition of 'The Hours', the manuscript that would become *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). It looks at the various works of non-fiction that were composed alongside the novel and the way in which these fragments of writing are catalogued within the manuscript; the draft is intersected and interrupted by a corpus of critical material that would later be published within the first volume of *The Common Reader* (1925).

Considering the various texts contained within the manuscript, the chapter interrogates Woolf's thinking about the solidity of textual boundaries, suggesting that the manuscript can be read as a multi-faceted and multi-layered text that challenges our understanding of literary works as single, static and authoritative artefacts. The chapter also turns its attention to the difficulty scholars face in tracing the transmission of *Mrs Dalloway* from pen to print due to Woolf's idiosyncratic cataloguing of the manuscript. By examining Woolf's collation of her draft material, as well as her presentation of the British Library manuscript in neatly contained volumes, the chapter suggests that there is a tension between the appearance of textual cohesion and her sporadic methods of composition. This helps us to read Woolf's theorisation of textuality as both fixed and mutable, as bordered and borderless. By tracing the echoes of earlier textual states in the published edition of the novel, this chapter considers how revisions overlap palimpsestuously, which speaks directly to Woolf's rupturing of the linear progression of time in the novel.

The final two chapters of the thesis return to Woolf's engagement with the visual arts, and both are concerned with the way she engages with Post-Impressionist aesthetics in her writing. The fourth chapter focuses on *To the Lighthouse*, and in particular considers the changes Woolf made to the character of Lily Briscoe in her manuscript material. While Lily has become a paragon of defiant female creativity in Woolf's work, returning to the manuscript reveals that Woolf had not planned to include an artist in her novel at the initial stages of writing. This chapter suggests that her initial drafting of the painter in the manuscript marks a shift in her

engagement with the aesthetics of Post-Impressionism, and her literary use of colour and form. The development of a ‘painter on paper’ also enabled Woolf to think about the nature of colour perception, and whether the effects of colour can be achieved in language. While this idea is also deliberated in her short fictions ‘BLUE. & GREEN.’ (1921), the chapter considers the way Woolf’s ‘prismatic’ philosophy of colour underlines Lily Briscoe’s experimental colourism in *To the Lighthouse*.<sup>76</sup> The chapter also draws attention to a section of the manuscript in which Mrs Ramsay’s engagement with visual culture, her ‘past life amongst painters’, is foregrounded. Excised from the published edition, this section highlights Mrs Ramsay’s involvement with the painting process in the way paints are made, stored and applied to the canvas. As I argue in this chapter, Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe use a shared language of colour as a means to communicate a mutual aesthetic sensibility.

Woolf’s use of colour also provides the basis of the fifth chapter of the thesis, which focuses upon *The Waves*. Thinking about the text as a literary ‘mosaic’, as Woolf describes it in her diary, the chapter interrogates how her use colour in the narrative is a strategy that enables her to embed her work within the materiality of Bloomsbury domestic culture.<sup>77</sup> While the mosaic is an appropriate metaphor for modernism in its aim to re-structure old materials into new arrangements, it is a particularly useful image for thinking about *The Waves* as a composite and fragmentary narrative, in which the voices of six speakers intersect and overlap. Engaging with the pointillist techniques of Vanessa Bell, in paintings such as *The Pond at Charleston, East Sussex* (c. 1916), her portraiture and, significantly, in her dust-jacket design for Woolf’s novels, it will suggest that Bell’s visual patterning is echoed by Woolf in *The Waves* through her repetition of colours and phrases. Rather than consider the text’s engagement with the work of Vanessa Bell as ‘nonrepresentational’, as Marianna Torgovnick suggests, taking the reader ‘out of the

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<sup>76</sup> See Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 172.

<sup>77</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf Volume 3: 1925-1930*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeilie (London: Hogarth Press, 1980), p. 298. All further references to Woolf’s diary are to this edition and volume and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

“sequence” and into abstract, meditative states of mind’,<sup>78</sup> this chapter argues that Woolf’s materialist colourism fits with her overall feminist project to provide, as Goldman contends, a ‘prismatic’ representation of reality.<sup>79</sup> Reconsidering the figure of Susan, who is often characterised in traditional terms, the chapter draws attention to the visually creative impulses articulated by her in adolescence and reads these as indicators of a potentially feminist visual aesthetic. Susan’s criticism of institutionalised education and gendered segregation at school also suggests an underlying but unarticulated feminism. This chapter argues that Woolf’s use of colour within *The Waves* enables her to convey a sense of continuity and entanglement across the soliloquies, but it also allows her position visual and material signifiers within her narrative as a means of signifying her resistance to imperialist institutions that underlie the fabric of British society.

Rather than consider Woolf’s literary aesthetics as removed from the material and political moment in which she wrote, the overall trajectory of this thesis is to draw attention to the way materiality informs her feminist politics throughout her work. While her early work at the Hogarth Press allowed her to interrogate how the Bloomsbury concept of the ‘aesthetic emotion’ could be adapted for women artists, her engagement with literary materiality sensitised her to the interaction between the abstract concept of thought and the material conditions that enable these to be communicated. This, as Woolf demonstrates in *A Room of One’s Own*, is bound to issues of gender. Literature, she suggests in this text, is the ‘work of suffering human beings and [is] attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live’ (*AROO*, pp. 53-4). The final iterations of this thesis address the posthumously published ‘Anon’ (1941), suggesting that this essay offers a way of understanding Woolf’s conceptualisation of the

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<sup>78</sup> Marianna Torgovnick, *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence, Woolf* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 136.

<sup>79</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 36.

‘literary sensation’ as a product of the ‘anonymous world’.<sup>80</sup> Underlying the individualised assertions of the printed text, Woolf proposes, are impulses or instincts that provide the basis for literary art; this she suggests is a collective, and unconscious resource that can be ‘tapped’ into by the writer, and it has the potential to reintroduce marginalised voices within established narratives. By considering the extent to which this text revises Fry’s idea of the aesthetic ‘sensation’, it will demonstrate how Woolf’s emphasis on materiality can be read as a means of re-surfacing disparaged traces of a female past. In writing and in printing at the Hogarth Press, Woolf became conscious of the textures and impressions of ink through her dialogue with the plastic arts. But rather than mimic the effects of painting in literature, she uses visual and material signifiers (colours and solid objects) as a means of unifying her politics and aesthetics, her feminism and literary materialism.

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<sup>80</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘Anon’, in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 6, 1933-1941*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2011), pp. 581-599 (p. 584). All further references to Woolf’s essay are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

## Chapter I:

### Conversations in Colour and Ink: Literary Materialism at the Hogarth Press

The printed book was a source of fascination for Virginia Woolf during her adolescence. Poring for hours over the library collection of her father, the literary historian and biographer Leslie Stephen, she educated herself in the art of writing. But it was also her profound interest in the materiality of her father's books that made a lasting impression upon her. As she would recall in December 1929: 'It was the Elizabethan prose writers I loved first & most wildly, [...] which father lugged home for me [...] why I don't know, but I became enraptured, though not exactly interested, but the sight of a large yellow page entranced me' (*D3*, p. 271). Captivated by the appearance of the text and its pages, Woolf's nascent reading practices were underlined by the visual and material aspects of the printed book; in this diary entry she reveals that it is the 'sight of the large yellow pages' that she remembers most vividly. Her interest in the materiality of the book did not go unnoticed by Leslie Stephen. On his daughter's fifteenth birthday in 1897, he gave her ten volumes of John Gibson Lockhart's *Life of Scott*.<sup>1</sup> These purple leather-bound books were enthusiastically received by Woolf, and a letter to her brother Thoby reveals her rapturous response:

Fathers [*sic.*] Lockhart came the evening I wrote to you – ten most exquisite volumes, half bound in purple leather, with gilt scrolls and twirls and thistles everywhere, and a most artistic blue and brown mottling on their other parts. So my blinded eyesight is poring more fervidly than ever over miserable books – only not even you, my dear brother, could give such an epithet to these lovely creatures. (*L1*, p. 4)

Enamoured with the swirls and thistles that adorn the covers of the volumes, Woolf's engagement with Gibson Lockhart's books centres around their paratextual rather than textual aspects. She pores for hours over the beautiful volumes despite their 'miserable' content.

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<sup>1</sup> Woolf's reading practices, however, were intensely regulated and controlled by her father's conservatism. Through his instruction, she was taught the 'Victorian manner', which, she would later state, hindered her early writing practices: 'When I read my old *Literary Supplement* articles, I lay the blame on their suavity, their politeness, their sidelong approach, to my tea-table training. I see myself, not reviewing a book, but handing plates of buns to shy young men and asking them: do they take cream or sugar?' (*SP*, p. 152).

Notwithstanding the tensions Woolf found between the content and covers of these literary works, this chapter suggests that her early engagement with the aesthetics of the printed book directly influenced her later work at the Hogarth Press, where she sought to subvert the distinctions between the visual and the verbal aspects of a text. In the short fictions produced during the early years of the Press, Woolf experimented with the effects of the visual and graphic arts in her fictional writings. But in her printing practices she also considered the extent to which text and image could overlap and converse. While chapters four and five of this thesis consider Woolf's literary use of colour and form, this chapter examines the way Woolf developed and designed both the textual and paratextual elements of her first two hand-printed works at the Hogarth Press: 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917), and *Kew Gardens* (1919). Woolf commissioned and incorporated woodcut illustrations by Dora Carrington and Vanessa Bell respectively for the printing and publication of both texts. In these short stories Woolf stresses the multimodal interactions between word and image, and interrogates the boundaries between literary and visual methods of representation. While Carrington's woodcuts for 'The Mark on the Wall' are often considered ambiguous in their relation to the text (fig. 1), this chapter will reconsider them as reiterations of the narrative that speak directly to Woolf's theorisation of material artefacts as both static and mutable, animate and inanimate. Vanessa Bell's contributions to *Kew Gardens* raise similar questions about the tensions between silence and speech, which reflect Woolf's own intermissions of dialogue and reticence in the fictional narrative. By thinking about the way text and image intersect in these publications, the chapter will examine Woolf's ongoing conversations with the visual arts and find echoes of Vanessa Bell's paintings in the language of her short fictions. In doing so, it unifies Woolf's textual practices, as well as her feminist-materialist politics through her identification with the graphic arts.



Fig 1: Dora Carrington, Untitled Woodcut, in *Two Stories* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1917). Source: British Library, London.

### Bindings: Cloth, Linen, Silk

In 1901, Woolf began to experiment in the art of bookbinding. While her sister attended art classes at Arthur Cope's School of Art, and later at the Royal Academy,<sup>2</sup> Leslie Stephen arranged for his youngest daughter to receive lessons in the craft of book design. Annie Power and Sylvia Stebbing, who were accustomed to teaching 'genteel' young women how to bind letters, and preserve literary titles in their libraries, were employed to demonstrate the art.<sup>3</sup> Power and Stebbing, as Helen Southworth suggests, provide an association between Woolf's early bookbinding practices and the Arts and Crafts Movement, which placed an emphasis on the book as a valuable and aesthetic artefact rather than a utilitarian object.<sup>4</sup> Southworth notes that Woolf's instructors learnt the skills of bookbinding from 'Douglas Cockerell, who was in turn apprenticed to Richard Cobden-Sanderson at Doves Bindery, [and this] suggests continuity with

<sup>2</sup> For more on Vanessa Bell's education see Frances Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, pp. 18-24.

<sup>3</sup> See Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Southworth, 'Introduction', in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf*, pp. 3-5.



the Arts and Crafts Movement'.<sup>5</sup> While the movement has been acknowledged as an influence on Bloomsbury's concern for craftsmanship, its nostalgia for the past contrasts sharply with the aesthetic innovations of the early twentieth century, which placed an emphasis on the future of the arts rather than its origin.<sup>6</sup> Renowned for its expensive materials and ostentatious designs, Arts and Crafts publishing could not be further removed from Woolf's practical approach to book design later at the Hogarth Press.

While her adolescent book-designs, as well as her revolt against tradition, anticipates her experimental modernist aesthetics, it also foreshadows Woolf's break from conventional publishing practices in her work at the Hogarth Press. Never intending to identify the Press with the ostentatious publishing practices of the Arts and Crafts Movement, such as William Morris's Kelmscott Press, the Woolfs' unconventional approach to book production leans towards practicality rather than pretension, a style which was also celebrated by Bloomsbury artists at the Omega Workshops. While Morris' Press and its productions are characterised by a sense of nostalgia for a medieval past, the Hogarth Press sought to produce works that were reflective of modernity. As a statement released by the Press in 1922 reveals:

We [...] give particular attention to the work of young and unknown writers. [...] We intend to issue reproductions of the works of living painters. On the other hand, it is none of our purpose to reprint the classics; nor shall we sacrifice time or money to embellish our books beyond what is necessary for ease of reading and decency of appearance.<sup>7</sup>

Moving away from an emphasis on reputation and canonicity, the Press aimed to draw attention to new aspiring writers, who were often overlooked at larger and well-established publishing houses. As Melissa Sullivan notes, the Hogarth Press 'addressed the changing needs and tastes of

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<sup>5</sup> Helen Southworth, 'The Bloomsbury Group and the Book Arts', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*, ed. Victoria Rosner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: S. P. Rosenbaum, *Aspects of Bloomsbury: Studies of English Literary and Intellectual History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 151; Helen Southworth, 'Introduction', in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf*, p. 3; Katherine Mullin, 'Victorian Bloomsbury', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*, ed. Victoria Rosner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 19-32 (p. 25).

<sup>7</sup> Virginia and Leonard Woolf, 'Anniversary announcement with list of publications and description of A and B subscriptions', 1922, Leonard Woolf Papers, University of Sussex.

the British reading public through its work on politics and education, and [...] its engagement with a network of middlebrow women writers.<sup>8</sup> The inclusivity of the Hogarth Press also extended to the visual arts, as the Press statement highlights, and this can be read as part of Bloomsbury's aim to disseminate 'high art' to wider cultural spheres. Publishing works of 'living painters' would provide a means for the wider public to own works of art (albeit a reproduction) without having to access a gallery or pay vast sums of money for an original. Like Hogarth the Omega Workshops employed young artists to produce items of furniture and earthenware for everyday use. Both establishments, as S. P. Rosenbaum notes, were not created for profit.<sup>9</sup> From the outset, the Hogarth Press was an anti-elitist project that sought to make the arts accessible to as wide a readership as possible in an age when cultural hierarchies were becoming increasingly visible.<sup>10</sup>

Although the lessons provided by Power and Stebbing taught her the practicalities of binding, Woolf never demonstrated much enthusiasm under their instruction. Rather than use the techniques she learnt to preserve the books she owned, she defied the conservation techniques they taught her. Woolf used the covers of an 1824 edition of Isaac Watts' *Logic: Or the Right Use of Reason* to cover her own diary because, as she informed her cousin Emma Vaughan in 1902, it conveyed the 'certain air of distinction' suitable for her own work (*L1*, p. 56). The odd coupling of Watts' widely circulated and popular empiricist essay with her own private diary, creates a tension between paratext and text, but it also prefigures her challenge to the male-dominated and public world of print, which she would articulate in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and her posthumously published essay 'Anon' (1940). In the latter she demarcated the printing press as the machine responsible for the silencing of women in the recorded history of literature.

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<sup>8</sup> Melissa Sullivan, 'The Middlebrows at the Hogarth Press: Rose Macaulay, E. M. Delafield and Cultural Hierarchies in Interwar Britain', in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*, ed. Helen Southworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 52-73 (p. 53).

<sup>9</sup> S. P. Rosenbaum, *Aspects of Bloomsbury*, p. 151.

<sup>10</sup> Sullivan considers the extent to which commercial publishing houses reflected and reinforced these hierarchies within the literary establishment, with women writers more likely to be 'frustrated or inhibited' by the industry. Sullivan, 'The Middlebrows of the Hogarth Press', pp. 56-64.

With the name of the individual male writer printed on the covers of his book, the female writer, Woolf suggests, is cast in the shadow of this self-assertion ('A', pp. 584-85).<sup>11</sup> While Woolf's seemingly playful appropriation of Watts' covers highlights her understanding of the interaction between text and paratext, it also demonstrates that her innovations in the art of the book is inextricably bound with her feminism. Her practice of undermining the volume demonstrates her disregard for the purpose of the book cover as a means of signifying the author's textual 'presence in the world', as Gerard Genette puts it.<sup>12</sup> While anonymity of the artist was a practice adopted at the Omega Workshops,<sup>13</sup> it also speaks directly to Woolf's conceptualisation of textuality as a dialogic interaction between writer and reader, which allows for a more inclusive approach to the literary arts.<sup>14</sup>

In her early bookbinding practices, Woolf displayed an inventive and experimental approach to design and aesthetics, which questions the very notions of the text as a static and unalterable artefact. In a less destructive manner than her initial attempts, she rebound an 1835 edition of Dante Alighieri's *Il Canzoniere* in brown cloth boards with floral and diamond-pattered papers which shield the spine of the text. The lettering on the spine is written in Woolf's own hand and it provides the text with a hand-crafted aesthetic in the use of her own handwriting. She had even designed her own publishing device for her hand-bound works, which demonstrates an early engagement with the visual signifiers of commercial publishing. Positioned either on the spine, or the verso of the outer boards, her device is heart-shaped with two interconnected swirls contained inside. Upon closer inspection, these markings suggest interlacing initials of her full name, Adeline Virginia Stephen. In its play upon her name, this

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<sup>11</sup> This essay is considered in further detail in the conclusion of this thesis.

<sup>12</sup> Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> The Omega Workshops published five books between the years of 1915 and 1918. Apart from P. R. Jouve's *Men of Europe* (1915), none of the Omega books include the author's name on the covers.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Woolf's essay 'How Should One Read a Book?' (1926), in *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 63-73.

design pre-empts the Hogarth Press wolf-head logo, a suggestion of the Woolfs' surname, which was designed by Vanessa Bell (fig. 2).<sup>15</sup>

By 1902, Virginia Stephen professed enough confidence as a bookbinder to offer instruction to Emma Vaughan. In a letter to her cousin, she writes:

Do come to lunch – then we can begin directly afterwards. [...] I have been making endless experiments and almost smelt my room out this afternoon trying to do gold lettering. Tomorrow I shall experiment with gold on cloth. I believe there is an immense field for this sort of thing. There seem ever so many ways of making covers – of leather – linen – silk – parchment – vellum – japanese [*sic*] paper etc. etc. etc. which the ordinary lidders never think of. (*L1*, p. 56)

Throughout her correspondence with Vaughan during this period, Woolf articulates a profound interest in the material aspects of the books she produced. Here she draws attention to the variety of materials that can be used as covers, and even criticises the designers at publishing houses, the 'ordinary lidders', for their conservatism. Her emphasis on cloths, silks, linens and Japanese papers in this letter, of the material but fluctuating movement of fabrics and the fluid textures of the covers, also brings to mind her later conceptualisation of the 'integument' as an image for the materialisation of her literary impulses in language. Just as the 'semi-transparent envelope' in 'Modern Fiction' surrounds the subject ('MF', p. 9), providing a material interaction between them and their environment, here Woolf characterises the covers of the book in a similar way; they envelop the text in soft materials that do not solidify the text's 'presence in the world',<sup>16</sup> but point towards a more collaborative interaction between writer and reader. There is a sense of permeability in Woolf's early cover designs that point towards her later conceptualisation of the text as a mutable artefact that encourages a dialogic transmission of ideas.

Even during the early stages of the Hogarth Press, Woolf's binding practices destabilise the fixity of the printed text. In 1917, Woolf's book-binding tools were no longer in her

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<sup>15</sup> Although her earlier destructive book-binding practices undermined the assertion of authorship, her publishing designs offer an allusion rather than a declaration of ownership.

<sup>16</sup> Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 1.



Fig. 2. Vanessa Bell's wolf-head publishing device. Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Hogarth Press, 1931).

possession; she had given them to Emma Vaughan, who at this point intended to sell them to a Prisoner of War camp located on the Isle of Man. In an attempt to reclaim her tools, Woolf wrote to Vaughan: ‘We would like *everything!* [...] I think the presses will come in most useful [...]. What luck I stepped in and frustrated the Isle of Man! But are you sure you couldn’t get a pound or two on them? – We would like to give whatever you might have had’ [emphasis in original] (*L2*, pp. 185-86). Re-engaging with the tools that facilitated her experimentation with book design during her adolescence, Woolf’s past creative practice is brought to the present by the return of these artefacts.<sup>17</sup> At this point, Woolf also re-commenced her unusual approach to book preservation. A 1904 copy of Charles Dickens’s *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), now located at Washington State University, was bound at this time in typical Hogarth Press fashion. Covered in the blue and white Japanese paper used by the Woolfs to cover their joint publication,

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<sup>17</sup> The loss of book-binding tools is also highlighted by the narrator of ‘The Mark on the Wall,’ who lists all the possessions she has lost in her lifetime: ‘[L]et me just count over a few things lost in our lifetime, beginning, for that seems the most mysterious of losses [...] three pale blue canisters of book-binding tools[.]’ (‘MW’, p. 4).

Dickens' text is repackaged in Hogarth clothing. Haunted by the faint ghosting of the title *Two Stories*, the text is rendered an absence in the presence of its new coverings.

While Woolf rebound the novel for reasons of preservation, her appropriation of the blue covers of her own work reinforce her theorisation of the text as a dialogic network of influences. As she makes clear in *A Room of One's Own*:

[M]asterpieces 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. (*AROO*, p. 85)

Although it is not the intention of this chapter to trace intertextual echoes in Woolf's short fiction, an interaction with the paratexts of her library reveal that these marginal spaces offer ways of reading her conceptualisation of the text with its multiplicity of influences. For Genette, the paratext is a borderland, an 'undefined zone between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary[.]'<sup>18</sup> It is also, he suggests, a 'zone of transition', in which the 'non-text' and the 'text' converge.<sup>19</sup> Permeable rather than impervious, both Woolf and Genette suggest that the coverings of a text are a space in which inter-textual and inter-artistic discourses can intersect. Rather than consider the text as contained by the boundaries of its material manifestation, Woolf's printing practices enable us to read her theorisation of textuality in a constant state of change and renewal.

### **First marks**

It was on Woolf's thirty-third birthday in January 1915 that the idea for the Hogarth Press first materialised.<sup>20</sup> While at Buszard's Tea Rooms in London, the Woolfs first discussed the idea 'in the first place to take Hogarth [House] if we can get it; in the second to buy a printing press; in

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<sup>18</sup> Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Genette, *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> The spontaneity of the Woolfs decision to buy a printing press has been widely documented. See Southworth (ed.), *Leonard and Virginia Woolf* (2010); Laura Marcus, 'Virginia Woolf as Publisher and Editor', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 263-79; Dubinio (ed.), *Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace* (2010).

the third to buy a bull dog, probably called John' (*D1*, p. 28). When the Hogarth Press was officially established it was unconventional to say the least. After ordering a hand-press impulsively from a shop in Holborn called Excelsior Printers' Supply Company, along with some type and a guide book to amateur printing, the Press awkwardly came into fruition in 1917. With no experience in commercial book production, and having been rejected a place on a course at St. Bride's School of Printing because they were 'too old' (Virginia Woolf was thirty-five and Leonard Woolf was thirty-six) the Woolfs resorted to teaching themselves the art.<sup>21</sup> When the Press arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, a part of it was broken and had to be replaced.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of the malfunction, the summer of that year was devoted to printing, which left Woolf feeling that the press would 'devour' her entire life (*L2*, p. 150). While Leonard Woolf was unable to set the type due to a congenital hand tremor, Woolf would insert the miniscule letters herself into the press's platen prior to inking. It was an arduous and time-consuming process, as she reveals in a letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies: printing was '[t]he work of ages, especially when you mix the h's with n's, as I did yesterday' (*L2*, p. 150). Intended initially as a recreational pastime from her arduous struggle with her second novel, *Night and Day* (1919), Woolf's involvement at the Press liberated her from the grasp of Duckworth Publishers, which was owned by her half-brother Gerald Duckworth. Having complete editorial freedom over her work facilitated a more experimental approach to narrative writing, as Woolf suggests in her diary: 'It is tremendous fun, and it makes all the difference writing whatever one likes, and not for an Editor' (*L2*, p. 169). This new-found freedom encouraged her to experiment with the formal structure of the short story, to think

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<sup>21</sup> See Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918* (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 233.

<sup>22</sup> In a letter to Vanessa Bell, dated April 26<sup>th</sup> 1917, Woolf describes the arrival of the press: 'Our press arrived on Tuesday. We unpacked it with enormous excitement, finally with Nelly [Boxall]'s help, carried it into the drawing room and set it on its stand – and discovered it was smashed in half! It is a great weight, and they never screwed it down; but the shop has probably got a spare part.' Virginia Woolf, *The Complete Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume 2*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1976), p. 150.

about the nature of perception in literature, and also to identify her work with the aesthetics of her Bloomsbury artist peers.<sup>23</sup>

In July 1917, the Woolfs began printing their first collaborative publication, *Two Stories*, which contained Leonard Woolf's short story 'Three Jews' and Virginia Woolf's 'The Mark on the Wall'. Producing this text enabled the Woolfs to directly engage for the first time with the material textures of their published work. The Press also influenced Woolf's approach to writing, as Hermione Lee suggests: '[F]or Virginia ['The Mark on the Wall'] "marked" a completely new direction, the beginning of a new form and a new kind of writing [...] the new machine had created the possibility of a new kind of story.'<sup>24</sup> Printing her own work also sensitised Woolf to the materiality of the printed word. In a letter to Vanessa Bell, she articulates her enthusiasm for printing Leonard Woolf's story:

We've been so absorbed in printing that I am about as much of a farmyard sheepdog as you are. I can hardly tear myself away to go to London, or see anyone. We've just started printing Leonards [*sic*] story; I haven't produced mine yet, but there's nothing in writing compared with printing. I want your advice about papers. (*L2*, p. 93)

Unable to tear herself away from the Press, Woolf's flippant statement that 'there's nothing in writing compared with printing' reveals the significant role the materiality of print played in the development of Woolf's own short fiction. Urging her sister to give advice about papers, it is clear that her initial concerns were with the visual aspects of her text rather than its content. Printing Leonard Woolf's story before drafting hers also raises questions about the extent to which the substances of print conditioned the literary aesthetics of 'The Mark on the Wall.'

An examination of a copy of the first edition reveals that there are noticeable visual differences between the two texts, which confirms that they were printed separately and on different occasions. The book itself is very fragile, and the papers covering the first edition housed at the British Library have become detached from the pages of the text. Neither of the

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<sup>23</sup> This will be explored further in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

<sup>24</sup> Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 365.



authors' names appear on the covers, which recalls Woolf's earlier interrogation of the role of the book cover in the assertion of authorship. With just the title printed in block capitals on the cover, a shamrock publishing device, and the location of publication in small lettering at the bottom, *Two Stories* distances Hogarth from commercial publishing practices of the early twentieth century, which often produced, according to Nancy Cunard, 'lavish editions of books by classic and modern authors'.<sup>25</sup> From the outset, Hogarth Press books lacked pretension, with the minimalism of their cover designs fitting with the wider Bloomsbury emphasis upon practical utility and formal simplicity. Laura Marcus suggests that their rejection of 'fine printing' also enabled them to survive the fraught economic climate of the 1930s in which many small presses failed.<sup>26</sup> Unassuming in its Japanese-paper covers (which were bought at a local stationer in Richmond) and its octavo size, the book consists of just thirty-four pages. The ink saturation of Leonard Woolf's 'Three Jews' is considerably darker than that of 'The Mark on the Wall'. Blotches of ink surround the text's first woodcut, as well as the title page, but the printing of the text itself is considerably clear given the Woolfs' lack of experience and formal training. The inking of Virginia Woolf's piece is noticeably lighter in colour, which provides her story with an ephemeral and faded quality as if the pages had been left in the sun to bleach.<sup>27</sup>

The suggestion of fading in the printing of the text corresponds with one of the first images that the speaker presents within the narrative: that of a 'film of yellow light upon the page of my book' ('MW', p. 1). Just as the light refracted by John's shard of glass manipulates the coherence of the human subject in 'Solid Objects', here the yellow light obscures the printed words of the narrator's book. Woolf frustratingly refrains from revealing the literary contents of

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<sup>25</sup> Nancy Cunard, *These Were the Hours: Memories of My Hours Press, Réanville and Paris, 1928-1931* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 5-6.

<sup>26</sup> Laura Marcus, 'Virginia Woolf as Publisher and Editor: The Hogarth Press', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 263-79 (p. 264).

<sup>27</sup> When Lytton Strachey first saw the book, he was surprised at the Woolfs professionalism, but questioned whether enough ink had been applied to the platen. Lytton Strachey, qtd. in, Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers*, p. 15.

the volume; it becomes a ghost-text within the narrative, which, like the paratext of Woolf's copy of Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*, signifies the intertextual traces that underlie its textual production. The lighter inking of 'The Mark on the Wall' similarly raises questions about the solidity of the printed word, which speaks directly to the light's manipulation of the book at the opening of the narrative. Here, then, the *mise-en-page* of *Two Stories* supplements readers' interpretation of the text, encouraging new ways of thinking about the narrative. Woolf's criticism of the traditionally perceived authority of the printed word is reflected in both the textual and paratextual elements of *Two Stories*. While the soft inking of Woolf's short story 'The Mark on the Wall' challenges the solidity of print, the narrator's strong disregard for Whitaker's *Table of Precedency*, a text that establishes patriarchal hierarchies, also signifies Woolf's criticism of the political regulations print can impose: 'The Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor; the Lord High Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York. Everybody follows somebody, such is the philosophy of Whitaker' ('MW', p. 18). It is not incidental that after thinking about this publication and the 'masculine point of view' that it upholds ('MW', p. 13), the narrator considers 'there is no harm in putting a full stop to one's disagreeable thoughts by looking at the mark on the wall' ('MW', p. 18). Acting as a mark of punctuation, Woolf draws an overt parallel between the typography of print and the narrator's thought processes, and in doing so foregrounds the complex processes of reading, and the varying meanings that can be generated from a single mark. While at first the parallel between the mark and the 'full stop' suggest a termination or an ending, the narrator's thought processes, her reading of the mark and its origin, signifies its potential for alternative narratives that continually counteract the assertion of a single truth. As Marcus writes: "'The Mark on the Wall'" explores the difference between the "masculine" point of view – fact-bound, hierarchical, constraining – and free-associative thinking which revels in the multiple imaginings opened up by freedom from the desire to find out what

things “really” are.”<sup>28</sup> In the short fiction, Woolf provides the mark with two functions: it influences the fluctuating and changing thoughts of the narrator, while destabilizing the supposed stasis of print.

Like John, who in ‘Solid Objects’ creates stories about the objects he collects, here the narrator’s reading of the mark generates varying fictions about its origin:

[M]y eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came to my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rocks. Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps. The mark was a small round mark, black upon the white wall, about six or seven inches above the mantelpiece (‘MW’, p. 2)

Undercut by the final blunt sentence in this passage, the narrator’s initial troubling vision of red knights ascending a black rock is interrupted by a return to the material substance of the mark on the wall. While Woolf’s use of stream of consciousness in this text enables her to layer the past upon the present in the narrator’s recollection of her ‘old fancy [...] made as a child’, the mark also brings the past to the present by encouraging the narrator to think about the material source of the substance: she thinks the mark could be ‘the head of a gigantic old nail, driven in two hundred years ago, which has now owing to the patient attrition of many generations of housemaids, revealed its head above the coat of paint’ (‘MW’, p. 16). Just as materiality brings the past to the present moment in ‘Solid Objects’ and *Orlando*, here the narrator understands that traces of the past can be found in the material present. With the layers of paint removed, the narrator anthropomorphises the nail and imagines its first view of the current temporal moment. While this furthers Woolf’s inclusion of non-human objects in human discourses, her aim to undermine the distinction between inert matter and human life,<sup>29</sup> it also speaks directly to her feminist-materialist revision of historical narratives. Like Mrs McNab, who in the ‘Time Passes’ section of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) recovers the Ramsay’s home from waste and ruin, in ‘The

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<sup>28</sup> Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. ix.

'Mark on the Wall' the narrator imagines 'generations of housemaids' recovering submerged artefacts from the past, which provide alternative and varying counter-narratives. Woolf, therefore, foregrounds matter's potential to offer new ways of reading material histories.

The intersection between print, materiality and the visual arts also marks a new direction in Woolf's aesthetic trajectory: that of aligning fiction with the material and visual aspects of the graphic arts. This she achieves most overtly by commissioning the work of contemporary visual artists to produce images to accompany her literary productions. In *Two Stories*, the Woolfs included four woodcuts by Dora Carrington, two of which appear in Leonard Woolf's text and two within 'The Mark on the Wall'. Although Carrington's woodcuts do not tend towards abstraction, like those later produced by Vanessa Bell, their intricate detail and shading provide the text with a visual dialogue that graphically materialises certain aspects of the narrative.

Writing to thank Carrington for her work, Woolf states: 'We liked the wood cuts immensely [...] We have printed them off, and they make the book more interesting than it would have been without. The ones I like best are the servant girl and the plates, and the Snail' (*L2*, p. 162).

Suggesting that the illustrations make the work 'more interesting', Woolf reinforces her interest in the visual aspects of the printed book. Her concern for multimodality in textual production is also evidenced in a letter to Vanessa Bell, in which she writes: 'We must make a practice of



Fig. 3. Dora Carrington, Untitled woodcut, in *Two Stories* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1917). Source: British Library, London.

always having pictures' (L2, p. 163). Although it is unclear whether Woolf showed Carrington the manuscript of both her and Leonard Woolf's texts, the woodcuts can be defined as illustrations in that they reflect, although not always overtly, images conveyed within in the narrative.

The first woodcut in 'The Mark on the Wall' appears directly above the title of the story. Woolf gives precedence to the image before her own text, and in doing so encourages a reading of the woodcut first.<sup>30</sup> The reader's eye lodges momentarily on the image before proceeding to engage with the narrative. Of all the woodcuts that decorate *Two Stories*, the first presented in 'The Mark on the Wall' is by far the most ambiguous, as well as the most troubling. It depicts a woman and a dog sat before a fireplace in which a violent blaze issues up the chimney (fig. 3). While the dog gazes at the woman, it is unclear whether she is warming herself by the fire or shielding herself from the billowing flames; the elongated stretch of her arms suggests the latter. Dark triangular shading surrounds the fireplace, as well as the woman, and this draws the observer's eye upwards and away from the centre of the image. In the bottom left corner of the woodcut is a strange shape that could suggest the corner of an armchair, or another observing figure, and this is depicted entirely in solid black ink. At first it is difficult to pinpoint which passage of text the image corresponds with. In the first paragraph of the narrative, the narrator tries to recall the moment she first noticed the mark on the wall: 'So now I think of the fire; the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece' ('MW', p. 1). Woolf's introduction of the fireplace influences the reader to reconsider Carrington's woodcut, but neither the three chrysanthemums in the glass bowl, nor the book the narrator has been reading, are represented in the woodcut. While Carrington's use of positive and negative space in her inking enables her to depict the effects of

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<sup>30</sup> According to John A. Bateman, there is a great divergence in the way texts and images are read and interpreted, with images providing a more immediate means of engagement. John A. Bateman, *Text and Image: A Critical Introduction to the Visual/Verbal Divide* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 60.

light in the room, the ‘steady film of yellow light’ emanating from the fire does not appear in the image.

On an initial reading, it seems that Carrington’s aestheticisation has little to do with Woolf’s narrative, providing nothing more than a visual accompaniment to the text.<sup>31</sup> The image of the fireplace, however, does return half way through ‘The Mark on the Wall’. In a passage of text that is included in the first edition, but excised from all other editions of the text published in Woolf’s lifetime,<sup>32</sup> the narrator produces an image of a hostile woman with the ‘profile of a police-man’:

[A] woman with a broom in her hand, a thumb on picture frames, an eye under beds and she talks always of art. She is coming nearer and nearer; and now pointing to certain spots of yellow rust on the fender, she becomes so menacing that to oust her, I shall have to end her by taking action: I shall have to get up and see for myself what that mark

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But no. I refuse to be beaten. I will not move. I will not recognise her. See, she fades already. I am very nearly rid of her and her insinuations, which I can hear quite distinctly. (‘MW’, p. 7)

The appearance of this unnamed woman and the threat she poses to the narrator’s freedom of thought is unusual, and it has not received a vast amount of critical attention. Nor has Woolf’s excision generated much discussion. While the figure recalls the ‘generations of housemaids’ who, the narrator thinks, return the material past to the present, the threat she poses to the narrator’s freedom is peculiar. Woolf’s use of the word ‘eye’ here also evokes the pronoun ‘I’, the use of which she would later critique in *A Room of One’s Own* because of its implication of a single and static point of view (*AROO*, p. 75).<sup>33</sup> In certain respects, the figure anticipates Woolf’s version of ‘the angel in the house’, who in ‘Professions for Women’ (1931) must be killed in order to liberate female creativity: ‘I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best

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<sup>31</sup> Although the chrysanthemums do not appear in Carrington’s woodcut, shortly after the publication of *Two Stories* Vanessa Bell began composing a painting called *Chrysanthemums* (1920), in which three of the flowers are depicted upon a shiny surface that could be a mantelpiece.

<sup>32</sup> The passage is, however, included in the new Hogarth Press edition of the text, which was published in 2017.

<sup>33</sup> At the end of ‘The Mark on the Wall’ the narrative is concluded by the appearance of a man, who mirrors the figure of Alan in *A Room of One’s Own* (*AROO*, p. 75).

to kill her. [...] Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart of my writing.<sup>34</sup> Although less savage than her later counterpart, the narrator in 'The Mark on the Wall' attempts to overcome the figure by refusing to recognise or acknowledge her, which enables her to continue her reverie.<sup>35</sup>

Touching the picture frames, the woman impresses her own fingerprint upon the marginal spaces of the art work. Although she 'talks always of art', the text suggests that her opinions are authoritarian and moralising. At this point in the narrative, Woolf reflects Fry's criticism of morality in art, which he argues, undermines the integrity of the subjective response to painting. In 'An Essay in Aesthetics', he writes: 'Morality [...] appreciates emotion by the standard of resultant action. Art appreciates emotion in and of itself.'<sup>36</sup> Morality, in Fry's opinion, is part of the 'actual life' and not the 'imagined life', which forms the basis of visual art.<sup>37</sup> In 'The Mark on the Wall', the narrator's stillness as she reads the mark similarly rejects the 'call to action' of the 'actual life'. But her refusal to clean, to clear away the signifiers of temporal change, also speaks directly to Woolf's feminist-materialism, which searches for traces of the past in objects of the present. If the figure's presence within the text is read as a force of regulation and 'compromise' ('MW', p. 7), then the narrator's refusal to submit to her criticisms is also a refusal to remove the visible markers of lived experience: here signalled in the presence of rust upon the fender. Significantly, the 'menacing' figure makes an appearance in the text shortly after the narrator has thought about the dust in her home: '[L]ook at the dust on the mantelpiece, for example, the dust which, so they say, buried Troy three times over, only

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<sup>34</sup> Woolf, 'Professions for Women' (1931), in *Selected Essays*, p. 140-145 (pp. 141-42).

<sup>35</sup> Heather Levy argues that her decision to excise the woman from all subsequent versions of the text signifies Woolf's marginalisation of working class people in her work. Heather Levy, *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf's Shorter Fiction* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p.78.

<sup>36</sup> Fry, 'An Essay in Aesthetics', p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> 'Between these two lives', Fry suggests, 'there is a great distinction, that in the actual life the processes of natural selection have brought it about that the instinctive reaction, such, for instance, as flight from danger, shall be the important part of the whole process, and it is towards this that the man [*sic.*] bends his whole conscious endeavour. But in the imagined life no such action is necessary, and, therefore, the whole consciousness may be focussed upon the perceptive and emotional aspects of the experience. In this way we get, in the imaginative life, a different set of values, and a different kind of perception.' Fry, *ibid.*, p. 13.

fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation[.]’ (‘MW’, pp. 6-7). The dust, here, functions as a material trace of the past within the present.<sup>38</sup> In the short fiction, Woolf reinforces the way in which materiality can interrupt the linearity of time by bringing the fall of Troy to the temporal present of the text. Her reference to the ‘fragments of pots’, which refuse to be destroyed, also brings to mind ‘Solid Objects’, a story in which Woolf offers a female revision of historical narratives through John’s engagement with material artefacts. In this story, then, the ‘menacing’ figure’s call to remove these traces of lived experiences from the temporal present is a cultural erasure that seeks to silence their histories.

As a means of combatting the authoritarian figure of the woman, the narrator composes an image of intellectual freedom, which is signified in the image of the fireplace in both the text and in Carrington’s woodcut:

I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciouly, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard and separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes. Shakespeare. [...] A man who sat himself solidly in an arm-chair, and looked into the fire, so –. A shower of ideas fell from some very high Heaven down through his mind (‘MW’, p. 8).

Mirroring her own position in front of the fire, Shakespeare is presented as the liberated artist the narrator wishes to emulate. She wants to relinquish the ‘hard and separate facts’ of the surface in search of alternative ‘ideas’, which Woolf suggests can be gripped palpably. But despite the suggestion that thoughts can be caught hold of, there is a tension between the ‘shower of ideas’ that Shakespeare receives, and the ‘hard and separate facts’ that regulate the narrator in her everyday experience. What the narrator seems to be searching for here is the ‘artist’s state of unconscious’, which Woolf would later describe in ‘Professions for Women’ as a state of being in which the female writer ‘let[s] her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being’ (‘PW’,

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<sup>38</sup> As Rebecca Munford suggests, the ‘semantic peculiarity of dust’ signifies ‘absence and presence, decay and replenishment, composition and decomposition[.]’ Rebecca Munford, *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 197.



p. 143). Escaping the ‘hostility’ posed by the authoritarian figure, the narrator wishes to undermine the definitive certainty of ‘surface’ facts, by thinking about the various things that could have created the mark, or the ‘infinite number of reflections’ from which fiction should be made (‘MW’, p. 11).

Carrington’s woodcut can be considered a visualisation of the narrator’s struggle for creative autonomy. Sat upon the floor in front of the fire, the woman depicted in the woodcut seems to be shielding herself from the blaze rather than enjoying the space as Shakespeare does in the text. There is, therefore, a dialogue between text and image at this point in the narrative. Threatened by interruptions, there is a sense of urgent anxiety in the narrator’s erratic narration, which also corresponds with the woman’s stance in the image. But the tension between surface and depth in the narrative is furthered by the presence of the woodcut. Wood-engravings, as Kristin Bluemel argues, complicate the processes of reading print: ‘[W]ith their dependence on contrasts of depth on the wood-block to achieve contrasts of meaning on the flat surface of the page, [they] complicate this model [of reading]. They invite not only formal or “surface” analysis of image and word but also “depth” analysis of historical and social situations.’<sup>39</sup> In ‘The Mark on the Wall’ Woolf’s writing challenges the fixity of surface tensions, by drawing her reader’s attention to the complicated depths of conscious thought. ‘Literature is,’ as Randall suggests, ‘a space where the thinking that we are always doing can be thought about, can be represented[.]’<sup>40</sup> While the mark provides a single observable point on the surface of the wall, Woolf’s emphasis on the literary representation of thought challenges the assumption that literature operates within a ‘temporal linearity’ or a single dimensional framework. If, as Paul Crowther suggests, literary ‘meaning is dependent on comprehending specific parts in an exact, linear, temporal order’,<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Kristin Bluemel, ‘“Definite, Burly and Industrious”: Virginia Woolf and Gwen Darwin Raverat’, in *Virginia Woolf and Her Female Contemporaries*, ed. Julie Vandivere and Megan Hicks (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2016), pp. 22-28 (p. 25).

<sup>40</sup> Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*, p. 169.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Crowther, for example, suggests: ‘With literature and music [...] we have arts of a temporal realization. Here the recognition of meaning is dependent on comprehending specific parts in an exact, linear, temporal

then Woolf's narrative unsettles the coherence of linear direction by offering alternative and contradictory assumptions about the mark, which frustrate her readers' desire for a definitive conclusion. Her emphasis on material traces of the past within her writing similarly disrupts the progression of time by introducing alternative stories and past events within the spaces of her text. Woolf's interaction with the material substances of literature at the Hogarth Press, as well as her ideas about the phenomenology of physical objects, underlies her thinking about aesthetics. The significance of this is that it allows us to read the ways she uses materiality (both in terms of the printed book and the representation of objects in her fictions) as a means of breaching the distinctions between various forms of artistic representation.

### Woodcuts and colour

The visual arts dominate Bloomsbury aesthetics, and literature is often characterised as inferior to painting. As Clive Bell writes in *Art* (1914): 'Literature is never pure art. Very little literature is pure expression of emotion [...]. Most of it is concerned, to some extent, with facts and ideas: it is intellectual.'<sup>42</sup> The 'quarrelsome' debate between painters and writers in Bloomsbury circles were never resolved.<sup>43</sup> This discrepancy between painting and writing forms the basis of Woolf's essay *Walter Sickert: A Conversation*, published in pamphlet form by the Hogarth Press in 1934. As silence falls upon the fictional conversation of the text, the narrator attempts to define painting in linguistic terms:

At last, said one of them, we have reached the edge where painting breaks off and takes her way into the silent land [...] Let us hold painting by the hand a moment longer, for though they must part in the end, painting and writing have much to tell each other; they have much in common. The novelist after all wants to make us see. [...] The novelist is always saying to himself, How can I bring the sun onto my page? How can I show the night and the moon rising? [...] It must be done with one word, or with one word in skilful contrast with another. (*WS*, p. 43)

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order.' Paul Crowther, *Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (even the frame)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 72.

<sup>42</sup> Clive Bell, *Art*, p. 153.

<sup>43</sup> Suzanne Bellamy, 'The Visual Arts in *To the Lighthouse*', in *The Cambridge Companion to To the Lighthouse*, ed. Allison Pease (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 136-145 (p. 138).

Silent and elusive, and indifferent to the verbal world of the literary writer, painting occupies a land devoid of the 'impure medium' of language (*WS*, p. 43). Here Woolf positions the writer and the viewer as scavenging 'rooks', as onlookers relegated to the margins of paint. In contrast to the disdainful scorn of the artist, the writer, who demonstrates an inquisitive interest in its sister art, even hints at the possibility of collaboration: 'painting and writing have much to tell each other' (*WS*, p. 43).

As a way of challenging the apathy of the artist, in this essay Woolf's tactic is to highlight the similarities between visual and verbal means of communication. For her, pictures, although static and uncommunicative, often suggest fictions, and the narrator of the essay deliberates what sort of novelist Sickert would be: 'He is a realist, of course, nearer to Dickens than to Meredith. [...] Sickert is the novelist of the middle class' (*WS*, pp. 41-42). Yet despite his realism, Woolf suggests that Sickert's minimalist use of colour also defines his art: 'Sickert merely takes his brush and paints a tender green light on the faded wallpaper. [...] He has no need of explanation; green is enough' (*WS*, p. 40). Recalling her critique of the Edwardian 'materialists' for their over-explanatory approach to writing, here Woolf advocates for minimalism and restraint in the modern novel. She encourages this approach to writing through her engagement with colour. In order to depict 'night and the moon rising,' the writer she suggests must refrain from the impulse to describe, and instead use 'one word in skilful contrast with another' (*WS*, p. 43). At this point in the essay, Woolf seems to comply with Bloomsbury's criticism of literature in its reliance upon verisimilitude. However, here she directs her criticism to examples of realist novels from the literary past. This suggests a reiteration of her argument in 'Modern Fiction' that the future of the novel lies in a movement away from the excesses of solid craftsmanship to the subjective experience of 'myriad of impressions' ('MF', p. 9) from the observable environment.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Woolf's literary aesthetics are founded upon the idea of exchange. The act of printing at the Hogarth Press enabled her to experience the embodied transferal of the material substances of literature, but she also thought about the

visual arts in terms of material exchange. Throughout her career as a publisher, Woolf sought to emphasise this by printing the work of living artists as well as writers. After the success of *Two Stories*, Woolf's second publication at the Hogarth Press, *Kew Gardens* (1919) also stresses the significance of visual and verbal collaboration. Shortly after producing 'The Mark on the Wall' in July 1917, Woolf wrote to Roger Fry to inform him of her future intentions at the Press:

Tomorrow we are going to see a £100 press which we are told is the best made, – particularly good for reproducing pictures. This opens up fresh plans, as you will see. Wouldn't it be fun to have books of pictures only, reproductions of new pictures – but we must get you to tell us a little about how one does this. Carrington is swarming with woodcuts. It is most fascinating work. (*L2*, p. 166)<sup>44</sup>

Considering the idea of printing a text consisting of 'pictures only', this can be read as part of Woolf's plan to position the Hogarth Press at the centre of Bloomsbury aesthetic innovation. The new printing press would create the possibility of a new direction for Hogarth, a direction increasingly concerned with the reproduction of visual art. After 'The Mark on the Wall', Woolf's own literary productions were side-lined momentarily. She had agreed to print Katherine Mansfield's *Prelude* in July 1917, a considerably longer text than *Two Stories*, and it took the Woolfs longer to produce than they had anticipated.<sup>45</sup> Woolf acted as compositor for Mansfield's story, setting the type, which she would sometimes do in bed: 'I had to spend the day recumbent. However, this is much mitigated by printing, which I do from my bed on the sloping table' (*DI*, p. 66). Printing Mansfield's story provided Woolf with the time to consider how she could design Hogarth books, and from the beginning it is clear that she took responsibility for formulating the Hogarth Press visual aesthetic. She did not wish to have the Press associated with the work of J. D. Fergusson, the artist Mansfield wanted to illustrate her text. Woolf even decided to stop printing his woodcuts after the first few copies were produced, as she reveals in a letter to

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<sup>44</sup> The £100 press would roughly equate to £7,800 in today's economy, indicating that the Hogarth Press was becoming less of a hobby and more of a business enterprise.

<sup>45</sup> Mansfield frequently articulated her impatience throughout the printing of the piece. In 1918, she wrote to Ottoline Morrell: 'I think the Woolfs must have eaten the Aloe root and branch or made jam of it.' Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield: Volume 2: 1918-1919*, ed. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 87.

Vanessa Bell: 'I wish [Mansfield] and Murray didn't think Ferguson [*sic.*] a great artist. He has done a design for her story which makes our gorge rise to such an extent that we can hardly bring ourselves to print them' (*L2*, pp. 243-44). While printing *Prelude*, Woolf commissioned a book that would enable her to associate her Press with the work of her favoured visual artists. It would be a book of woodcuts consisting of the work of the Bloomsbury painters: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry.

Bell wrote to her sister congratulating her on the printing of *Two Stories* in July 1917.

Impressed by the professionalism that the Woolfs displayed in their first publication, particularly in the printing of Carrington's woodcuts, Bell wrote:

It has occurred to me, did you seriously mean that we might produce a book (I mean a pamphlet) of woodcuts? Both Duncan and I want very much to do some, and if you really thought it feasible, I should like to get a few other people also to produce one or two each and get together a small collection. Could this be arranged with your new press? and if so, how many could there be and what size? I would undertake to get the woodcuts, if you think it could be done, in the course of the next few months, or whenever you hadn't anything else you wanted to print. It wouldn't mean very much trouble for you, as there'd be very little letter press. (*VBL*, pp. 207-8)

It seems that the sisters discussed the idea in person; Vanessa Bell's letter, however, demonstrates her own eagerness and enthusiasm to develop the publication. The correspondence between the sisters during this time charts their developing ideas about how the text could be designed and produced. Woolf thought that the best way to print pictures was to print them as separate pieces: 'I have another suggestion to make about the wood cuts [*sic.*]. Mightn't we print them, not in a book, but as separate sheets, one wood cut to one sheet? [...]. By this method, all the difficulties of binding, cover, title page, would be got over[.]' (*Letters 2*, pp. 178-9). Unfortunately, the Woolfs were unable to get the £100 press that would have enabled them to print the woodcut designs successfully.

In 1918, however, a book of woodcuts was produced at the Omega Workshops, and this shares many similarities with the designs formulated by the sisters in their correspondence. Originally intended to be published at the Hogarth Press, the text, entitled *Original Woodcuts By*

*Various Artists*, was forsaken by the Woolfs because of a disagreement between Leonard Woolf and Vanessa Bell concerning the sequencing of the woodcuts.<sup>46</sup> Arguing against the editorial censorship of Leonard Woolf, Bell's desire for aesthetic control over the publication is apparent.<sup>47</sup> While Fry has most frequently been positioned as the sole executor of the publication, it was Bell who formulated the layout of the piece. More significant, however, is the subtle influence that Bell's own paintings had upon several of the woodcuts in the text, in particular those produced by Fry and Duncan Grant. The two copies of *Original Woodcuts* located at the Special Collections and Archives at Cardiff University reveal the extent to which Vanessa Bell influenced their designs.<sup>48</sup> Three successive pieces Roger Fry's 'The Stocking', Vanessa Bell's 'Nude' (fig. 4), and Duncan Grant's 'The Tub' (fig. 5) are all reflective of each other, and they all correspond with Bell's earlier composition also titled *The Tub* (1916) (fig. 6). In contrast to the unequivocally firm lines in Fry's preceding two pieces, 'Still Life' and 'The Cup', his third woodcut is profoundly more intricate and textured. Entitled 'The Stocking', it depicts a naked woman (who bears remarkable resemblance to Bell) pulling up a stocking; there is a container of water behind her, in which she has presumably been bathing. On the wall behind is a mirror in which the woman's form is reflected in positive as opposed to negative inking, which reverses the chiaroscuro of Bell's earlier work. Directly after Fry's woodcut is Bell's 'Nude', which is clearly a variation on her earlier painting. While in the painting the standing female figure is positioned on the right of the image, here she stands on the left, partially obscuring the bath behind her. One of the flowers in the vase on the windowsill had been excised, leaving only two remaining.<sup>49</sup> The way in which the flowers droop downwards reflects the woman's stance; she is

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<sup>46</sup> See Joanna Selbourne, *British Wood-Engraved Book Illustration, 1904-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 96.

<sup>47</sup> Woolf's idea that the woodcuts should be printed separately would have solved this problem, but it seems that Woolf's involvement with the piece had come to a conclusion.

<sup>48</sup> *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (London: Omega Workshops Ltd., 1918). Source: Cardiff Rare Books Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Cardiff University.

<sup>49</sup> Frances Spalding reads Bell's revision as biographical, with the three flowers of *The Tub* each representing the jealous love triangle of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and David Garnett. In the woodcut, however, only



Fig. 4. Vanessa Bell, 'Nude', in *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (London: Omega Workshops Ltd., 1918). Source: Special Collections and Archives, Cardiff University.



Fig. 6. Vanessa Bell, *The Tub* (1917). Oil on canvas. Source: Tate, London.



Fig. 5: Duncan Grant, 'The Tub', in *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (London: Omega Workshops Ltd., 1918). Source: Special Collections and Archives, Cardiff University.

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two flowers remain, and they represent Bell and Grant albeit in a somewhat distant arrangement. Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, p. 174.

holding her head down as she plays with her hair, creating a sense of solemnity, as well as emptiness; this in turn is exaggerated by the negative spacing in the void of water at the centre of the composition. Duncan Grant's woodcut is unambiguous about its origin; possessing the same title as Bell's earlier work, it is clear that this woodcut acts as an intertext to Bell's painting. Despite this, in content Grant's work is profoundly different from *The Tub*, as well as the other woodcuts. The woman in his piece is seated within the bath; although with her back to the observer, she exudes significantly more confidence and vitality. While the curtains in the preceding woodcuts fall straight, here they are thick and drape around the window, framing the woman and the bath. The fact that both Grant and Fry mirror Bell's paintings in their respective compositions, positions her as a significant influence in the development of the text, which reinforces her central role as an artist in the Omega Workshops.

Despite her lack of involvement in the project as a publisher, Woolf's influence is very much present in *Original Woodcuts*. Bell's first woodcut, simply titled 'Dahlias' (fig. 7), is reminiscent of her sister's 'The Mark on the Wall', and it also anticipates the aesthetics, visual and literary, both sisters would deploy in *Kew Gardens*. Bell's wood-carving technique, markedly different from that of her contemporaries, displays a sense of mutability and movement. There is more texture in Bell's pieces, a feathery softness brought about by her careful attention to carving the lines. Like brush-strokes, the lines of her woodcuts blur the contrast between light and dark within the woodcut, making the flowers almost indistinguishable from the wall behind them. The leaves of the flowers slant downwards, and the entire piece is underlined by the upward angle of the mantelpiece on which the flowers are positioned. There is an interplay between solidity and softness in the woodcut; the petals of the flowers are feathered, while the jutting angle of the mantelpiece is carved with a broader line. Corresponding with the chrysanthemums depicted in 'The Mark on the Wall', here the dahlias are positioned in a manner that mirrors Woolf's own text. The woodcut also corresponds with a painting of Bell's created





Fig. 7: Vanessa Bell, 'Dahlias', in *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (London: Omega Workshops Ltd., 1918). Source: Special Collections and Archives, Cardiff University.



Fig. 8: Vanessa Bell, *Still Life on Corner of a Mantelpiece* (1914). Oil on canvas. Source: Tate, London.

four years previously: *Still Life on Corner of a Mantelpiece* (1914), which also depicts a flower arrangement (fig. 8). Mantelpieces are frequently represented in the work of both sisters; as Judith Allen notes, they are important sites of creative expression for both Bell and Woolf: ‘The mantelpieces that simply abound in Virginia Woolf’s writings, in their many varied contexts, may function as a blank canvas [...] and not incidentally, a means to project a strong sense of its creator – its artistic director.’<sup>50</sup> A focal site of creativity and innovation, both Bell and Woolf use the image of the mantelpiece to communicate across their respective artistic media in a way that enables them to identify with each other’s work. As we have seen, the mantelpiece in ‘Solid Objects’ symbolises John’s commitment to recovering the disparate materials of the past, while the mantelpiece in ‘The Mark on the Wall’ is layered thick with the dust that covered Troy. Marcus draws attention to the significance of the mantelpiece in Woolf’s short fictions: ‘[T]he mantelpiece – a narrow strip of marble – [...] becomes the “focus”, as if [Woolf] had set up her easel in front of it. The short stories thus connect the series of paintings produced in the mid 1910s by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, depicting objects, still lives on the marble mantelpiece in Bell’s studio in Gordon Square.’<sup>51</sup> Using the easel to blur the distinction between the writer and the painter, Marcus suggests that the objects presented on Bell’s mantelpiece are the source of both visual and literary creativity. The image of the mantelpiece, which is conveyed by both sisters in their respective media, can be read as a symbol of their creative identification, as well as their shared emphasis on the domestic spaces that facilitate their art. Bell even used the image in her design for the dust-jacket of *A Room of One’s Own*. Upon the mantelpiece in the design is a clock, the hands of which read ten to two in a ‘V’ shaped format signalling the shared initial of their first name (fig. 9).

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<sup>50</sup> Judith Allen, ‘The Aesthetics/Politics of the Mantelpiece’, *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, 85 (Spring, 2014), 28-31 (28).

<sup>51</sup> Laura Marcus, ‘The Short Fictions’, in *A Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jessica Berman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), pp. 27-40 (p. 33).

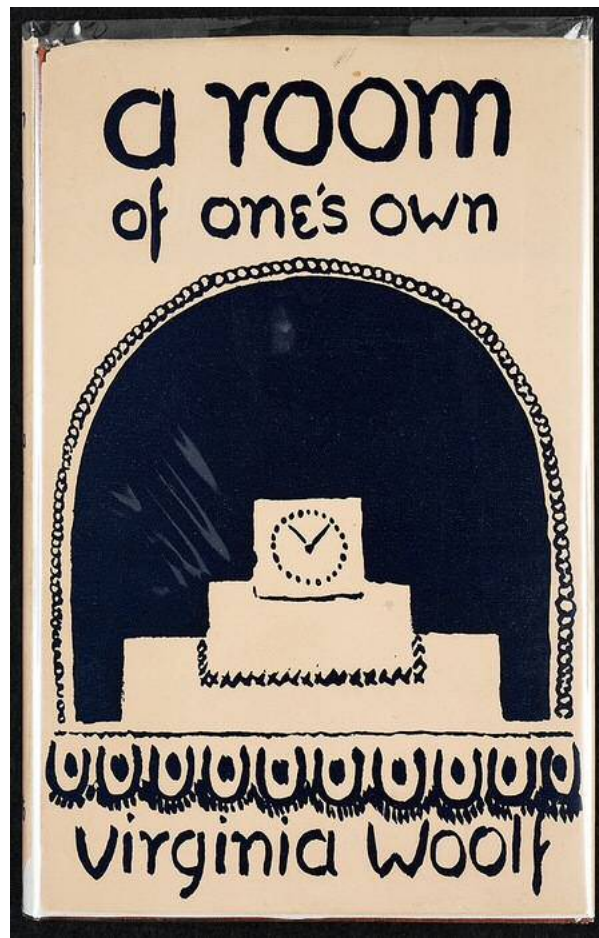


Fig. 9. Vanessa Bell dust-jacket for Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929).

Yet the sisters' first collaborative artwork at the Hogarth Press, *Kew Gardens* (1919), raises further questions about the dialogic interaction between word and image. Shortly after the publication of *Original Woodcuts*, Woolf commissioned her sister to produce woodcuts for her short story. After Woolf had written the piece in June 1918, she wrote to her sister to tell her that she thought the story 'very bad' and 'not worth printing' (L2, p. 255). She did decide, however, to send the manuscript to Bell, hoping that her sister's illustrations would salvage the production: 'Don't you think you might design a title page? Tell me what you think of the story. I'm going to write an account of my emotions towards one of your pictures, which gives me infinite pleasure, and has changed my view on aesthetics[.]' (L2, p. 257). Woolf's impulses to put

into language her feelings about her sister's art work, mirrors the response Bell felt after reading Woolf's text:

I wonder if I could do a drawing for it. It would be fun to try, but you must tell me the size. It might not have much to do with the text, but that wouldn't matter. But I might be inclined to do the two people having the sugar conversation. Do you remember a picture I showed at the Omega of 3 women talking with a flower bed seen out of the window behind? It might almost but not quite do as an illustration. (*VBL*, p. 214)

Inspired by her sister's writing to visually materialise the text's 'sugar conversation', Bell's response mirrors Woolf's in that both sisters display an awareness that verbal and visual art forms share the same aesthetic intentions, albeit in a different mode of representation. In the same letter, Bell encourages her sister to write an account of her responses to one of her paintings, which signifies her aspiration for a literary translation of her art work. In reading *Kew Gardens*, Bell notices a subtle reference to one of her own compositions: a picture she showed at the 'Omega of 3 women talking'. This painting is entitled *A Conversation* (1913-16), and in the composition three women are depicted conversing in front of an open window through which a flowerbed can be seen behind them (fig. 10). Within the painting, Bell brings to the foreground the interplay between the visual and the verbal; while the painting's three figures are engaged in conversation, the observer is confined to the silent space of the art gallery. Speech and silence, then, are juxtaposed with the openness of the window and the flowerbed beyond exaggerating the viewer's distinction from the speakers in the painting. Bell's rejection of perspective enables her to position the flowers directly behind the speakers, almost as if they are crowding around and listening to the conversation. Spalding argues that the flowers become 'the visual equivalent to the animated chatter of the three women', but the subject matter of their discussion can never be revealed through the silent medium of paint.<sup>52</sup> Bell's painting, then, materialises language in a visual format. When Woolf saw the painting, she wrote to her sister:

I am greatly tempted to write 'Variations on a Picture by Vanessa Bell'. [...] I think you are a most remarkable painter. But I maintain you are into the bargain, a satirist, a conveyor of impressions about human life: a short story writer of great wit and able to

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<sup>52</sup> Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, pp. 153-154.

bring off a situation in a way that rouses my envy. I wonder if I could write the Three Women in prose. (*L1*, p. 498)<sup>53</sup>

Just as Bell was inspired to illustrate *Kew Gardens* after reading the manuscript, Woolf similarly expresses a desire to put into language the silence of her sister's painting.

As this exchange suggests, the production of *Kew Gardens* enabled Woolf and Bell to materialise the conversation, or rather the lack of it, between the visual and the verbal arts. While the Hogarth Press did not incorporate visual adornments that were unnecessary, the way in which the Press aligns its productions with Bloomsbury aesthetic practices demonstrates its involvement in what Koppen describes as 'a wider aesthetic project of proclaiming modernism as an overall experience'.<sup>54</sup> Woolf's printing practices at the Hogarth Press broaden the aesthetic experience of her text through the inclusion of elaborate decorations throughout the publication. The hand-printed first edition places an emphasis on colour as a visual underscore. Aesthetically more experimental than *Two Stories*, the cover of the first edition is made of card, hand painted black with orange, aubergine, and blue marbled paint on top (fig. 11). This practice of painting the covers of books was also deployed at the Omega Workshops with the publication of *Original Woodcuts* (1918), and although this title preceded the production of *Kew Gardens*, it is important to remember that the work originated at the Hogarth Press. Whether or not it was at Hogarth that the idea of hand-painting covers arose, the fact that it was adopted by the Woolfs further stresses the idiosyncratic aesthetic of *Kew Gardens*, as well as the Press itself. The technique was used throughout the years of hand-printing at Hogarth; T. S. Eliot's *Poems* (1919), and *The Waste Land* (1923), both incorporate this design feature. As a result of hand-painting, each copy of *Kew Gardens* is slightly different in appearance; due to the marbling effect, some are bluer in appearance, whereas others display more aubergine or orange paint. The early hand-printed books produced at the Hogarth Press fit with Bloomsbury's emphasis on the individuality of

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<sup>53</sup> 'Three Women' is another title for *A Conversation*, and Woolf most frequently refers to it as the former.

<sup>54</sup> Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*, p. 19.

crafting by hand running counter to the commercialisation of mass-produced texts. Unlike her first production at the Press, Woolf's name appears on the front of the work alongside that of her sister. Both artists are positioned as equal contributors to the piece. Opening the text reveals the interior cover decoration, which is equally as beautiful as its external counterparts; a floral design of magenta, lavender, green and gold adorn the interior of the painted board covers, and reminds readers of the prints and fabrics that were being produced contemporaneously at the Omega Workshops (fig. 12). Designed by Bell, the colourful interior decorations mirror the emphasis Woolf places on colour within her text. The 'red or blue or yellow petals' that unfurl from the flower-beds at Kew Gardens also correspond with the colours that marble the covers of her work.<sup>55</sup>

Like 'The Mark on the Wall', the narrative of *Kew Gardens* is centred upon questions of seeing and interpreting visual stimuli from the environment. Just as the narrator in Woolf's earlier story makes an attempt to distinguish the mark and its origin, here Woolf draws attention to the ambiguity of form and colour:

From the oval shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart shaped for tongue shaped leaves half-way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end. The petals were voluminous enough to be stirred by the summer breeze, and when they moved, the red, blue and yellow lights passed over the other, staining an inch of the brown earth beneath with a spot of the most intricate colour. (KG, n.p.)

While in the explanatory notes of the Oxford edition of the text David Bradshaw prosaically assumes that the flowers are 'probably gladioli', Woolf does not reveal the species of flower within the flower-bed.<sup>56</sup> For her, realism within fiction is superfluous and unnecessary. The mutability of colour that she depicts in narrative form is fluid. Like paint, the reds, blues and

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<sup>55</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Kew Gardens* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1919) n.p. All further references to Woolf's text are to this edition.

<sup>56</sup> David Bradshaw, 'Explanatory Notes', in *The Mark on the Wall and Other Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 101-109 (p. 101).



Fig 10. Vanessa Bell, *A Conversation* (1913-16). Oil on canvas. The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

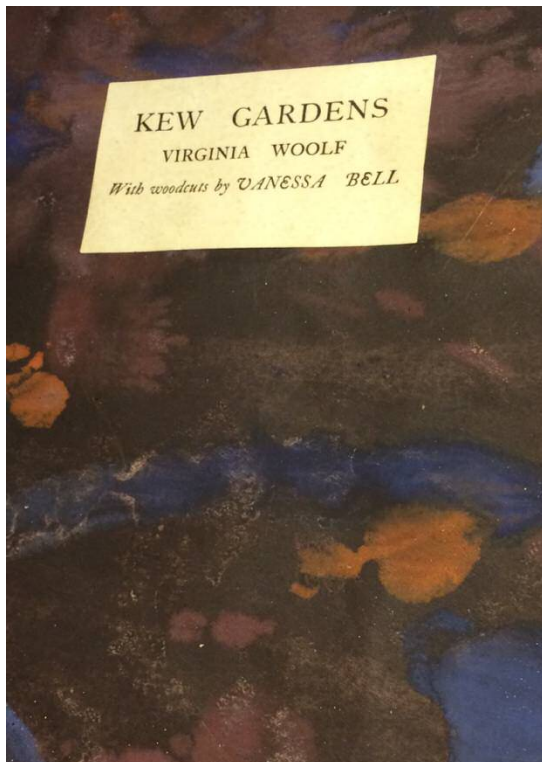


Fig. 11. Virginia Woolf, *Kew Gardens* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1919). Source: British Library, London.

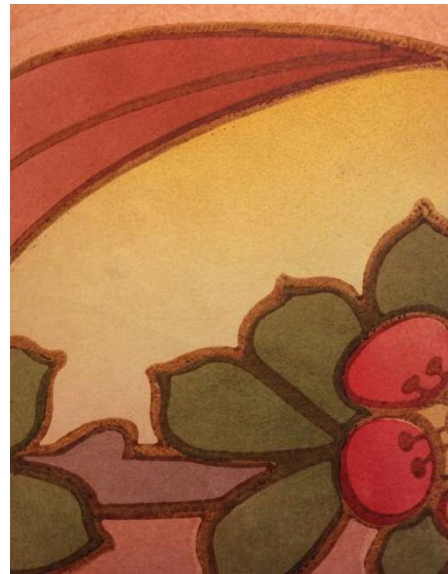


Fig. 12. Vanessa Bell, interior decoration, In *Kew Gardens* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1919). Source: British Library London.

yellows that stain the earth create a sense of movement and effervescence: '[A]nd again it moved on and spread its illumination in the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart shaped and tongue shaped leaves' (*KG*, n.p.). Light too plays a prominent role here; it is closely aligned with the colour; the red, blue and yellow of the flowers seem to emanate light from them, illuminating the garden and the 'figures' that pass them. There is a language of colour, as Goldman notes, which is 'closely connected to the wafts of human conversation drifting past the flower beds'.<sup>57</sup> Just as Spalding positions the flowers in Bell's *A Conversation* as the visual equivalent of speech, Goldman argues that in *Kew Gardens* the flowers 'are like mouths with tongues of colour, which become reference points for the snatches of conversations flitting around them. [...] The colours signal multivocalness[.]'<sup>58</sup> In this text, then, colour is not as 'silent' as the artist would lead us to believe, and both Woolf and Bell in their respective artwork work to undermine the taciturnity of paint. For them, colour is a way of communication between different modes of artistic representation.

*Kew Gardens*, then, can be considered Woolf's ekphrastic response to her sister's painting. While James A. W. Hefferman defines ekphrasis as a narrative device that 'traditionally turns the depicted moment into a story of what the painting represents', in Woolf's text this is not the case.<sup>59</sup> She is not simply providing a story of the three women and their conversation; rather, she uses various signals that point towards her sister's painting without direct references to the composition. As we have seen, the flowers of both the painting and the text signify the sisters' aesthetic identification. But by examining the way in which Woolf positions text on the pages of her work suggests that she was paying particular attention to the *mise-en-page* and spatial layout of the text, more so than in the 'The Mark on the Wall'. There is a much greater margin surrounding the text; it frames the narrative, with the surrounding white paper giving the

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<sup>57</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 112.

<sup>58</sup> Goldman, *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>59</sup> James A. W. Hefferman, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993) p. 183.



impression of light and space. The paper, which was acquired by Fry, is much thicker than that used in *Two Stories*, and its thickness is reminiscent of sketching or calligraphy paper; it feels almost like fabric and is soft to touch. The paper, then, provides the text with a tactility, which makes the reader even more conscious of the its materiality; it also reflects the soft furls of the flowers in the flowerbed. The ways in which Vanessa Bell's woodcuts are feathered at the edges similarly make the reader more conscious of the material substance of the work. These too are heavily inked, more so than those created by Dora Carrington in *Two Stories*. The first appears directly after the title page and depicts two (rather than three) women positioned in front of the bed of flowers, as well as a curtained window. Despite the third woman's absence, from the text as well as the woodcut, the figures, the flowers and the curtained window, all feature in Bell's *A Conversation*. The woodcut, then, can be considered a visual revisioning of Bell's earlier painting, here presented alongside her sister's literary experimentation, which demonstrates a shared commitment to breaching the fissure between the sister arts.

The text's 'sugar conversation' also re-enacts the conversation of Bell's painting, which tantalises the observer because of its perpetuating silence. However, Woolf's fictional conversations in *Kew Gardens* are little more revealing than Bell's painting. Fragmentary and incoherent, the women's discussion is difficult to interpret: 'My Bert, Sis, Bill, Grandad, the old man, sugar. Sugar, flour, kippers, greens, sugar, sugar, sugar' (*KG*, n. p.). Undermining the clarity of dialogue, Woolf places an emphasis in the text on language's ability to suggest colour and vision:

The ponderous woman looked through the pattern of falling words at the flowers standing cool, firm and upright in the earth, with a curious expression. [...] So the heavy woman came to a standstill opposite the oval shaped flower-bed, and ceased even to pretend to listen to what the other woman was saying. She stood there letting the words fall over her, swaying the top part of her body slowly backwards and forwards, looking at the flowers. Then she suggested that they should find a seat and have their tea. (*KG*, n. p.)

Mirroring the incandescence of the colours in the flowerbed at the opening of the text, here it is the woman's words that fall in a pattern. The materiality of language is emphasised here. Words

are patterned, almost decorative. There is a sense of superfluity and excess as the ponderous woman fails to listen to the trailing words of her companion. The words, however, do have an effect on her as she listens; she begins to sway backwards and forwards, but tries to gain composure by staring intently at the flowers. Her final cutting statement, that 'they should find a seat and have their tea', puts an end to the other speaker's discussion. Conversation also interrupts the flowerbed and its inhabitants: the snail 'whose shell had been stained red, blue and yellow for the space of two minutes or so' (*KG*, n.p.), vacates its location after being disrupted by the speakers. Speech, while punctuating the silence of the garden, dissipates from the story at the close of the text: '[T]heir voices went wavering from them as if they were flames lolling from the thick waxen bodies of candles' (*KG*, n.p.). The speakers themselves become shrouded in the colours of the garden, which consumes them: '[O]ne couple after another [...] were enveloped in layer after layer of green blue vapour, in which at first their bodies had substance and a dash of colour, but later both substance and colour dissolved in the green-blue atmosphere' (*KG*, n.p.). Returning the colourful mutability of the flowerbed at the opening of the text, here the speakers become part of the composition, as their colours begin to merge with that of the garden.

The final image of the text is not one of complete silence, and voices return to underscore the narrative: 'breaking the silence suddenly with such depth of contentment, such passion of desire, or, in the voices of children, such freshness of surprise' (*KG*, n.p.). Their speech, however, is indiscernible as it becomes part of the uproar of London that surrounds the garden: '[T]here was no silence: all of the time the motor omnibuses were turning their wheels and changing their gear; like a vast nest of Chinese boxes all of wrought steel turning ceaselessly one within another the city murmured[.]' (*KG*, n.p.). Undermining the distinction between silence and speech in the all-consuming murmur of the city, Woolf's text critiques the division between the arts by suggesting that silence is momentary. At the end of the text, the speakers become part of the garden; their bodies become substances of colour within the wider picture of the flowerbeds at Kew. The intermissions of silence and speech in this text, as well as Woolf's

experimentation with colour, work to challenge the distinctions between painting and literature, but it is ultimately the material transferal of print that facilitates Woolf's dialectic exchange with Bloomsbury aesthetics. While Clive Bell and Roger Fry used the literary arts as a starting point from which they could develop a new discourse for art criticism,<sup>60</sup> a discourse that defined itself in opposition to the aesthetics of literature, Woolf's early work at the Hogarth Press sought to re-unite the sister arts through collaboration and exchange. Her textual conversation with the woodcuts by Dora Carrington in 'The Mark on the Wall' call into question the tensions between surface and depth in both text and image, with the narrative rupturing linear temporality in the subject's theorisations about a material mark. Her collaborations with Vanessa Bell, meanwhile, further interrogate the visuality of writing and dialogic exchanges that occur between text, paratext, illustration and narrative. Woolf's early work at the Hogarth Press, therefore, reinforces her assertion that literature and literary aesthetics can never fully be abstracted from materiality. Like the plastic arts, literature is conditioned by the physical circumstances of its creation. As this chapter shows, the spaces of writing, the visual spacing of the page, and the inks that materially make present the writer's thoughts, all contribute to the overall aesthetic experience of the literary artefact.

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<sup>60</sup> Clive Bell, *Art*, p. 99.

## Chapter II:

### ‘The Unwritten Novel’: Material Fragments and Form in *Jacob’s Room*

I think that the main point is that it should be free.  
 Yet what about the form?<sup>2</sup>  
 Let us suppose that the Room [*sic.*] will hold it together.  
 Intensity of life compared with immobility.  
 Experiences.

To change style at will.<sup>1</sup>

Virginia Woolf faced many distractions while drafting *Jacob’s Room* (1922). After the relative ease and fluidity she experienced in writing her shorter fiction, producing her first novel at the Hogarth Press was a challenging process.<sup>2</sup> Between periods of illness, compositing, printing and binding at Hogarth, as well as writing reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement*, Woolf attempted to find an appropriate form for her new novel. A plan drafted on the first page of the manuscript reveals that she wanted to convey ‘the intensity of life compared with immobility’, as well as a sense of unity and fragmentation, which would be held together by a physical space: Jacob’s room. By examining the manuscript version of the novel, this chapter charts the transmission of the text from pen to print, and reveals how Woolf’s fragmentary writing process informed the formal structure of the published edition. One of the most striking aspects of the *avant-texte* of *Jacob’s Room* is the similarity it shares with the Hogarth Press first edition, which was printed in 1922. Unlike other examples of Woolf’s writings considered in the thesis, such as *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931), both of which underwent considerable revision, the manuscript of *Jacob’s Room* presents the text almost in a complete and comprehensive state. The

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room: The Holograph Draft*, transcribed and ed. Edward L. Bishop (New York: Pace University Press, 2010), p. 1. All further references to the manuscript of *Jacob’s Room* are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Writing to Ethel Smyth in October 1930, Woolf recalled the ease with which the stories for *Monday or Tuesday* (1921) were written: ‘These little pieces in Monday (or) and Tuesday [*sic.*] were written by way of diversion; they were little treats I allowed myself when I had done my exercise in the conventional style. I shall never forget the day I wrote The Mark on the Wall – all in a flash, as if flying, after being kept stone breaking for months.’ Virginia Woolf, *The Complete Letters: Volume 4*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), p. 231. All further references to Woolf’s letters are to this edition and volume and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

fragmentary narrative design, which was crafted in the manuscript, also enables Woolf to undermine linear chronology by alternating between multiple perspectives, locational changes and shifts in time. Andrew McNeillie argues that Woolf's use of multiple points of view 'come[s] very close to Cézanne and his use, in still life, of multiple perspectives, and perhaps also to a species of Cubism.'<sup>3</sup> Vara Neverow, similarly, notes that the narrative is 'multi-media word collage, combining futurist motion with the flickering cinematic frames of film and the mechanic notion of wind-up toys[.]'<sup>4</sup> Both of these statements draw attention to the fragmentary design of the novel, but by turning to the manuscript draft this chapter considers how Woolf achieves this effect in her compositional processes. It will also suggest that her work as a printer and publisher at the Hogarth Press conditioned her formalist approach to writing *Jacob's Room*. Although comparisons between the form of the novel and the visual arts have been well established,<sup>5</sup> this chapter interrogates the way Woolf's experimentation converses with the formalist materialism of Post-Impressionist artwork and aesthetics, its manipulation of space and shape, and also its emphasis on 'sensation' in art.

Questions concerning the shape of the novel plagued Woolf throughout the text's composition. While she thought about her novel in formalist terms, light and colour also underlined her initial vision for her work. It was to be 'all crepuscular', 'as bright as fire in the mist', with the 'looseness and light', the 'form & speed' of her earlier short fiction (*D2*, p. 13). While this statement anticipates Woolf's description of Lily Briscoe's painting in *To the Lighthouse*, its 'colour burning on a framework of steel' (*TL*, p. 54), it also reinforces the influence of the visual arts in Woolf's own writing process. The same diary entry, drafted in January 1920, articulates a concern about structure and form:

Suppose one thing should open up out of another – as in An Unwritten Novel, only not for 10 pages but 200 or so – doesn't that give the looseness & lightness I want [...]. For I

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew McNeillie, 'Bloomsbury', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-24 (p. 18).

<sup>4</sup> Vara S. Neverow, 'Virginia Woolf and City Aesthetics', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 88-103 (p. 89).

<sup>5</sup> Sherman, *In a Strange Room*, p. 105.

figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist [...] Whether I'm sufficient mistress of things – that's the doubt; but conceive Mark on the Wall, K.[ew] G.[ardens] and Unwritten Novel taking hands and dancing in unity. What the unity shall be I have yet to discover; the theme is blank to me; but I see immense possibilities in the form I hit upon more or less 2 weeks ago. (*D2*, pp. 13-14)

Woolf's approach to writing is informed by her earlier literary experimentation in her short fictions, and the various narrative methods deployed in these texts. 'Changing style at will' would enable her to alternate between the rapid and fluctuating stream of consciousness of 'The Mark on the Wall' and 'An Unwritten Novel', and the subject-void narration of 'BLUE. & GREEN.' and 'Monday or Tuesday'. The act of compiling a collection of short stories is also echoed in Woolf's plan for *Jacob's Room*, where she suggests an aim to bring together disparate fragments of narrative into a unified whole, which would be contained by the room itself. Her spatial metaphor is also extended further in her thinking about the architecture of the text in the removal of the bricks and scaffolding of 'conventional' narrative writing. Rather than constructing a solid and imposing form for her novel, her design is characterised by light and dark, by chiaroscuro: 'all crepuscular,' yet 'as bright as fire in the mist'.

It was the process of writing 'An Unwritten Novel', however, that Woolf acknowledged as fundamental to the development of *Jacob's Room*. The short story she would later write was her 'great discovery', and it helped shape her experimentation as a modernist writer. In a diary entry written in 1934, Woolf revealed that 'An Unwritten Novel' provided the experimental framework for her later works, including *Mrs Dalloway* (1925): '[The story] – again in one second – showed me how I could embody all of my deposit in a shape that fitted it [...]. I saw, branching out of the tunnel I made when I discovered that method of approach Jacob's Room's *Mrs Dalloway* etc. – How I trembled with excitement'.<sup>6</sup> The close proximity between the composition of her short fictions and the inception of her formalist design for *Jacob's Room* in

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<sup>6</sup> Virginia Woolf *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 4*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeilie (London: Hogarth Press, 1982), p. 231.

January 1920 reinforces the continuity between the novel and *Monday or Tuesday* (1921). Using the manuscript draft of the text to reveal Woolf's process of composition, the chapter will firstly interrogate how the idiosyncratic form of the novel was developed during the writing stages of production. Secondly, it will propose that the distinct fragments of both the manuscript and published edition can be read as a series of shorter fictions, which are held together by the material bindings of the novel. Working its way towards the published edition of *Jacob's Room*, it will also consider how Woolf preserved and bound her manuscript volumes as if they are complete and coherent textual entities. The close similarities between both the manuscript and printed versions of *Jacob's Room* enable us to trace how the radical form of the novel was developed during Woolf's compositional processes. Her hand-printing practices during the early years of the Hogarth Press, such as the use of Xs to demarcate space, demonstrate her thinking about her narrative in formal and spatial terms even during her nascent drafting of the text. Woolf's experimental approach to literary form, as this chapter suggests, also draws a parallel between her work and the innovations of visual form in Post-Impressionist artwork, particularly with regards to the manipulation of perspective and the coherence of familiarity. In short, Woolf's literary materiality at the Hogarth Press, and her experimentation in the format of the printed text, conditions her conversations with wider modernist formalist concerns of the early twentieth century.

### **Printing fragmentation**

It was Woolf's practice to write on leaves of unbound paper. Whether writing in her converted tool shed at Monk's House,<sup>7</sup> or at her easel-like desk at Hogarth House in Richmond, London, she most frequently used sheets of paper acquired from Leader, a prominent paper manufacturer in the 1920s and 30s. Significantly, this paper was also used for printing, and the watermark of

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<sup>7</sup> For more on Woolf's writing shed see Hancock, *Charleston and Monk's House*, p. 109.

the manufacturer is visible in all hand-printed editions of the Woolfs' *Two Stories*. While the use of this relatively thin writing paper for printing during the early years of the Hogarth Press reinforces the Woolfs' amateurism at this time, it also establishes the close proximity between writing and printing in Virginia Woolf's literary materiality. The manuscript of *Jacob's Room* was also drafted upon loose sheets of this paper, which were bound by Woolf in three manuscript volumes and contained in Hogarth Press covers. In a manner similar to the first edition of *Kew Gardens*, Woolf adheres a square of cream card to the cover of each notebook, denoting the title of the novel and the volume number. While the second and third volume notebooks are somewhat demure in appearance, volume one is covered in a mustard coloured paper with blue and red diamonds painted upon it; the same covers were used by the Woolfs to cover Hope Mirrlees's *Paris*, which was published at Hogarth in May 1920.<sup>8</sup> In choosing to present her draft material in a manner reflective of her early printed works, Woolf unsettles the distinction between text and *avant-texte*, and foregrounds a sense of continuity between draft and printed material. The manuscript material at the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library shows that Woolf rarely upheld distinctions between the drafting of one text and that of another when writing them. The second volume of the *Jacob's Room* manuscript contains fragments of other literary and critical pieces, including the short sketches 'Holborn Viaduct', 'The Telephone', 'Written for a Picture/ A Letter to a Lady', and 'A Death in the Newspaper', as well as an incomplete fragment of 'A String Quartet', which was included in *Monday or Tuesday* in 1921.<sup>9</sup> While the third volume of the manuscript has been titled 'Book of scraps of J's R. & first version

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<sup>8</sup> Although all Hogarth Press editions of the text are dated 1919, the actual date of publication was May 1920. This was either a mistake made by the Woolfs, or it could suggest that the covers were produced prior to the printing of the text, which took longer than they had anticipated. For more on this see Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 94.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'A String Quartet', in *Jacob's Room. Notebook II*. The Henry W. and Alfred A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library. This is a rare surviving manuscript of the stories collected in *Monday or Tuesday*; the manuscript drafts of 'The Mark on the Wall', *Kew Gardens* and 'An Unwritten Novel' have not yet been uncovered or have been destroyed. 'Holborn Viaduct', 'The Telephone', 'Written for a Picture/ A Letter to a Lady' and 'A Death in the Newspaper' have been published in Susan Dick's, *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Shorter Fiction* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace, 1989), pp. 314-15.



of ‘The Hours’, only twenty-two pages of the draft relate to the conclusion of *Jacob’s Room*, and also redrafted passages relating to chapters two, four, ten and eleven of the novel. The volume also contains several short fictions, including ‘The Prime Minister’ and ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’, which would later be adapted into the opening section of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).<sup>10</sup>

Woolf’s printing practices at the Hogarth Press also informed her experimentalism in *Jacob’s Room*. Nine days prior to beginning work on the manuscript, Woolf finished her work as a compositor and printer for Hope Mirrlees’s *Paris*. Although little of the process was recorded by Woolf, Mirrlees provided instructions for how she wanted the text to be printed.<sup>11</sup> The text’s *mise-en-page* is one of the most avant-garde poetic structures of modernism, with its synthesis of poetry and musical scores, its alternation between upper and lower cases, and lettering printed horizontally down the page:

The coming to.....  
Thick halting speech – the curse of vastness.

The first of May

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<sup>10</sup> For more on this see chapter three of this thesis.

<sup>11</sup> A three-page proof of the Mirrlees’s text demonstrates that she provided the Woolfs with instructions about spacing and typesetting. These are housed at the E. J. Pratt Library at Victoria University, Toronto. For more on this, see Julia Briggs, “‘Printing Hope’: Virginia Woolf, Hope Mirrlees and the Iconic Imagery of *Paris*”, in *Woolf in the Real World*, ed. Karen V. Kukil (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2005), pp. 31-6 (p. 32).

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Julia Briggs describes the printing of the poem as ‘the single most difficult task Woolf ever undertook as a printer.’<sup>13</sup> As the text ‘actively employ[s] typography and spacing as part of its system of representation’, printing the text influenced Woolf to think about the ways in which these aspects could be included within her own work.

Although *Jacob’s Room* was printed by R. & R. Clark in Edinburgh, Woolf envisioned the spatial layout of her text and demarcated empty gaps in order to create a sense of episodic fragmentation. The spacing in the published edition also suggests absence in its lack of signification, which anticipates the loss of the central figure in the empty space of his room at the end of the text.<sup>14</sup> In her collection of short fiction *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), which was printed shortly after Mirrlees’ *Paris* in March 1921, Woolf experimented with the visual spaces of print, particularly in the fictions ‘BLUE. & GREEN.’ Positioned on adjacent pages, the texts of both stories create a rectangular shape in the centre of each page. Sim considers the typography and the printing of these texts as a way of reading Woolf’s engagement with colour and painting:

Woolf’s sketch is an attempt to render colour in language, but the common names for colour, such as ‘blue’ and ‘green’ are deemed inadequate. This is suggested by the titles of each sketch, ‘BLUE.’ and ‘GREEN.’, which are followed by full stops, indicating the limited expressive capacity of these names. [...] In the original Hogarth Press edition of *Monday or Tuesday*, the two sketches have the appearance of paintings, as the paragraphs are almost square [...]. Thus both in terms of their spatialization and content, they resemble paintings hanging in a gallery.<sup>15</sup>

This suggests that printing at the Hogarth Press influenced Woolf’s thinking about the ways the formal structures of print conditions the experience of reading. Her use of negative space in

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<sup>12</sup> Hope Mirrlees, *Paris* (London: Hogarth Press, 1920), pp. 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> Julia Briggs, “‘Modernism’s Lost Hope’: Virginia Woolf, Hope Mirrlees and the Printing of *Paris*”, in *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 80-95 (p. 83).

<sup>14</sup> This will be discussed in further detail below.

<sup>15</sup> Sim, *Virginia Woolf and the Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, p. 72.

printing both her short fictions and *Jacob's Room* conditions readers to think about the visual aspects of print and how this can function as a means of signification.

Acknowledging the influence of Mirrlees in the production of *Jacob's Room*, Woolf uses the same harlequin-patterned bindings that cover *Paris* to bind the first volume of her manuscript. Woolf's involvement in the production of Mirrlees's *Paris* sensitised her to the way the formal configuration of space on the printed page could also be used as a means to convey silence and emptiness. As Briggs notes:

Woolf, too, was to learn from [Mirrlees's] lessons. Where her first two novels had been conventional in structure, her third [...] sought out a form that corresponded more closely to its content. [...] Her next novel would abandon the thirty-two chapter structure and instead use the layout of the page to create silences and meaningful pauses in the text, expressing these as gaps of varied line lengths.<sup>16</sup>

While Mirrlees's *Paris* cannot be overlooked as an influence for the fragmentary shape of the novel, the visual arts also played a significant role in development of the text. On April 15<sup>th</sup> 1920, the day before she began drafting *Jacob's Room*, Woolf wrote to Vanessa Bell informing her of her observations about art at the time: 'There is a good deal doing in the art world. [...] the X group – pictures in Shaftsbury, and the entire works of Bach played; Beethoven next week. [...] I dimly see that something in their style might be written' (*L2*, p. 429). This letter was written on the same day that Woolf formulated her plan for the novel, in which she articulated her intention to 'change style at will'. Woolf's reference to The X Group is also interesting given her concern for space and her intention to manipulate narrative form. The group were, as Mark Haworth-Booth writes, 'the last flourish of Vorticism'.<sup>17</sup> Under the organisation of Wyndham Lewis they sought to revive the earlier Vorticist movement of the 1910s, which like their cubist and futurist predecessors, undermined single perspectives and foreground the 'culture of fragmentation' that

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<sup>16</sup> Briggs, 'Modernism's Lost Hope', p. 91.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Haworth-Booth, *E. McKnight Kauffer: A Designer and His Public* (London: V&A Publications, 2005), p. 26.

defined modernity.<sup>18</sup> William Roberts' *The Cinema* (1920), which was included in the Group X exhibition, epitomises the multi-faceted nature of perception (fig. 1). The painting describes the interior spaces of the cinema, with the actors on the screen dominating the top left corner of the image. While colour remains absent from the film-screen, the cinema-goers are depicted in vivid colours of blues, reds and emerald greens, which enables Roberts to centralise the occupants of the space and their responses to the visual narrative. But rather than sitting in silent contemplation, like the actors on the screen, they are captured mid-gesture, which exaggerates their potential for movement. While the varied gestures of the people foreground the subjective experience of art, their animation also suggests a sense of disconnection from each other, pointing towards the lives they live outside the interior space of the cinema.

Whether or not Woolf saw this painting in 1920 remains unclear, but her plan for *Jacob's Room* raises similar concerns about perspective and the fragmentary experience of modernity. Like Roberts' depiction of the interior spaces of the cinema, Woolf uses a specific place (Jacob's room) as a means of creating unity: 'I think that the main point is that it should be free. Yet what about the form? Let us suppose that the Room will hold it together' (*JRH*, p. 1). Just as in *The Cinema*, in *Jacob's Room* Woolf brings together numerous people in her narrative, who provide little function in terms of plot. As Pamela J. Transue notes: 'Some [characters] seem to have been created for the sole purpose of providing an adequately well-rounded society [...]. At times, Woolf offers us a vivid sketch of character, and then never returns to the same character again.'<sup>19</sup> Often these individuals share the same spaces as Jacob, offering differing perspectives of the same location or event.<sup>20</sup> In the novel, physical spaces offer a means of conveying both unity and

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<sup>18</sup> Bart Keunen, 'Living with Fragments: World Making in Modernist City Literature', in *Modernism: Volume I*, ed. Ástráður Eysteinnsson and Vivian Liska (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2007), pp. 271-290 (p. 272). Woolf attended an exhibition of their work in April 1920, shortly before beginning *Jacob's Room* later that month.

<sup>19</sup> Pamela J. Transue, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 126.

<sup>20</sup> Woolf's use of place as a means of conveying unity and fragmentation is considered further in chapter three of the thesis.



Fig. 1: William Roberts, *The Cinema*, 1920. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.

fragmentation. In Woolf's plan, the space of Jacob's room also becomes synonymous with the form of the text as a structure of containment, just as the various fragments of Woolf's narrative are bound together in the material confinements of the manuscript volumes. This disjointed design is reminiscent of Mirrlees' *Paris*, but it also ties with her deliberation as to whether the effects of the visual arts can be represented in writing. Claiming that 'something in [the] style' of the Vorticist paintings 'may be written', Woolf solidifies the influence of twentieth-century aesthetics on her literary formalist experimentation.

The drafted plan for *Jacob's Room*, inserted at the opening of the first manuscript notebook, records Woolf's intent to convey the '[i]ntensity of life compared with immobility' (JRH, p. 1). Aiming to find a narrative form that would allow her to incorporate both movement and stillness, Woolf challenges the assumption that literature, unlike painting, belongs to the realm of temporality and linear narrative sequencing. Suggesting that the room would hold the

text together, Woolf's plan draws parallels with the Post-Impressionist manipulation of shape and form, which can be evidenced in paintings such as Vanessa Bell's *Portrait of Molly MacCarthy* (1914-15) and Duncan Grant's *Interior at Gordon Square* (1915). Both of these works use the repetition of geometric shapes to convey subjects and space (fig. 2 and 3). As the introduction to this thesis considers, Clive Bell's theory of 'Significant Form' is perhaps Bloomsbury's most overt assertion of the importance of formal shape in painting, sculpture and architecture, for example, and its ability to inspire 'aesthetic emotion' in the observer. In 'The Aesthetic Hypothesis' (1914) he argues that: '[L]ines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, I call "Significant Form"; and [this] is the one quality common to all works of art.'<sup>21</sup> While Bell's hypothesis takes into account the formal structure of a variety of material objects, such as ceramic bowls, Italian frescoes and even windows, he overlooks the physical form of the book and its *mise-en-page* as an aesthetic object. Perhaps this oversight is a result of Bell's insistence that literature is an 'impure art' because of its reliance on ideas and its potential to moralise.<sup>22</sup>

Although Woolf does not uphold Bell's autotelic view of art, her work as a printer at the Hogarth Press foregrounded the material substances of the book within Bloomsbury formalist discourses. Woolf's emphasis on the 'room' as a spatial metaphor for the novel is also significant given Bloomsbury's domestication of the arts into the interior spaces of the home. With the opening of the Omega Workshops in 1913, Bloomsbury artefacts could be purchased and

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<sup>21</sup> Clive Bell, *Art*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> R. V. Johnson elaborates on Clive Bell's assumptions in his work on aestheticism. Johnson draws attention to the tendency to make generalisations about the intentions of all forms of art: 'Underlying [...] views on form and matter is the assumption that literature, music and the graphic arts have enough in common for generalisations about 'art' in general to apply to all of them [...]. Literature is, arguably, impure art – as [...] Clive Bell has maintained – because it is dependent, unlike music and to a far greater degree than the graphic arts, on ideas; it thus tends to aspire [...] to that of a non-artistic discourse. Thus the novelist may deviate into the role of psychologist; the religious poet into that of theologian.' Johnson, *Aestheticism* [1969] (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 16-17.



Fig. 2: Vanessa Bell, *Portrait of Molly MacCarthy*, 1914-15, papier collé. Private collection.

Fig. 3: Duncan Grant, *Interior at Gordon Square*, c. 1915, oil paint on wood. Tate, London.



displayed in the homes of consumers.<sup>23</sup> Vanessa Bell was instrumental in the production of clothing, textiles, ceramics, and furniture, and her work as an interior designer is immortalised in the fabric of her home at Charleston in East Sussex, which has now been preserved as a relic of Bloomsbury creative innovation. While the rooms of the house were initially skeletal and bare when she first obtained occupancy, Bell soon decorated them in her own design, with warm cinnamon, lavender, and silver-grey colours, painted neo-Classical figures and floral patterns. Woolf also commissioned Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant to decorate her own property, Monk's House. While the walls of Woolf's home were less decorative than those of her sister, her furniture was painted in typical Bloomsbury fashion. In her examination of the spaces the sisters occupied during their lifetime, Hancock describes their houses as 'vivified biograph[ies]' of their inhabitants, which 'achiev[e] a heightened sense of Woolf's and Bell's physical aliveness; a quickening awareness of their animated living.'<sup>24</sup> Hancock also draws attention to the verbal nature of Bell's designs: 'Bell communicates through a vocabulary of circles, curves and volutes. Her decorative figures seem to derive from her calligraphic style, as she writes on the walls with the same roundness and commodiousness as she writes across a page.'<sup>25</sup> This reading of Bell's decorative work in terms of writing is significant given the ongoing collaborative conversation between the two sisters in their respective media; Bell's 'calligraphic style' can also be observed in the 1927 reprint of Woolf's *Kew Gardens*, in which her designs intersect the text and direct the eye of the reader. This symbiosis between the visual and verbal arts in domestic spaces also influenced Woolf's drafting of *Jacob's Room*. In August 1920, Woolf reached an impasse in composing the novel,<sup>26</sup> but resorted to cleaning and renovating Monk's House. As she notes in

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<sup>23</sup> For more on Bloomsbury and consumerism, see: Kathryn Simpson, 'Woolf's Bloomsbury', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Jane Goldman and Bryony Randall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 170-82; Jennifer Wicke, 'Coterie Consumption: Bloomsbury, Keynes and Modernism as Marketing', in *Marketing Modernism: Self-Promotion, Canonization and Rereading*, ed. Kevin J. H. Dettmar and Stephen Watt (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 109-32.

<sup>24</sup> Hancock, *Charleston and Monk's House*, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> Hancock, *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>26</sup> On August 5<sup>th</sup> 1920, Woolf notes in her diary: 'I write Jacob every morning now, feeling each days [*sic.*] work like a fence which I have to ride at, my heart in my mouth till its [*sic.*] over, & I've cleared or knocked the bar



her diary: 'I can now reckon up my labours: dining room distempered & cleaned; banisters painted blue; stairs white' (*D2*, p. 56). Engaging with the materiality of paint, like her sister, Woolf's decorative chores provide an alternative mode of creativity when her writing lacked superfluity. Although she had drafted a significant amount of the text at this point, her choice of blue and white mirror the colours that provide the backdrop for the opening of the novel.<sup>27</sup>

Woolf understood the significance of lived spaces in the recording of a life, as she would later demonstrate in her mock-biography, *Orlando* (1928). She also thought about her novels in architectural terms. While planning *To the Lighthouse* for example, her H-shaped design provided her with the analogy of a corridor, which enables her to convey the lapse of ten years, and move from the first to the third part of the text.<sup>28</sup> Throughout her writings, Woolf uses interior spaces, as well as the material possessions they contain, to convey a sense of the inhabitant. As we have seen in 'Solid Objects', John's peculiar arrangement of the artefacts upon his mantelpiece signifies his dislocation from the conventions of his society. At the end of the short fiction, John becomes part of his room, and his objects can be read as a material expression of his identity. Woolf's examines further the relationship between subject and lived space at the close of *Jacob's Room*. After his death, Jacob's room begins to resist the natural temporal progression, and records a momentary suspension in linear time:

"He left everything just as it was," Bonamy marvelled. "Nothing arranged. All his letters strewn about for anyone to read. What did he expect? Did he think he would come back?" he mused, standing in the middle of Jacob's room. [...]

Bonamy took up the bill for a hunting-crop.

"That seems to be paid," he said.

There were Sandra's letters.

Mrs Durrant was taking a party to Greenwich.

Lady Rocksbier hoped for the pleasure...

Listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtain; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker armchair creaks, though no one sits there. (*JR*, pp. 246-47)

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out. (Another image, unthinking it was one.)' Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 2*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), p. 56. All further references to Woolf's diary are to this edition and volume and page numbers are presented in the body of the thesis.

<sup>27</sup> The colourism of the opening of the novel is discussed in further detail below.

<sup>28</sup> This will be considered in further detail in the fourth chapter of the thesis.

While Jacob is the cause of the temporal stasis in his room by leaving his possessions as if he were to return to them, the various narrative fragments contained within his room point towards the daily lives of other people who continue to live in his absence. Just as the manuscript holds together the disparate fragments of the narrative, Jacob's room encloses various scraps of correspondence and other material artefacts that relate directly to him. In containing these letters and bills, the room records the life of Jacob through his material possessions; the inscriptions can be read as traces and records of his lived experiences, from his relationship with Sandra Wentworth Williams to his lifelong friendship with Timmy Durrant and his family. The suggestion of Jacob's presence in the creaking of the wicker armchair also reinforces the way objects can record the past lives of those who interact with them.<sup>29</sup> The room holds together these various artefacts which can be read, but it is also a space in which Bonamy and Betty Flanders attempt to reclaim the person they have lost through physically engaging with his possessions: the final haunting image of the novel is that of Mrs Flanders holding the old shoes of her dead son. At the close of the text, Jacob's shoes become an image of his presence, and of his absence. The significance of the shape and materiality of Jacob's shoes lies not in their abstraction from the human, as Clive Bell's formalism suggests,<sup>30</sup> but because their worn shape captures a sense of the individual who possessed them. In themselves these material artefacts provide a narrative that can be read and interpreted. Woolf's formalism, in the fragmentary structure of the text (which reflects the human experience of modern culture) as well as her

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<sup>29</sup> In her discussion of clothing, Elizabeth Wilson considers the strange relationship between clothes and the absent body. She writes: '[C]lothes are congealed memories of the daily life of times past. Once they inhabited the noisy streets, the crowded theatres, the glittering soirées of the social scene. [...] Clothes without a wearer, whether on a secondhand stall, in a glass case, or merely a lover's garments strewn on the floor, can affect us unpleasantly, as if a snake had shed its skin.' Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* [1985] (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 1-2.

<sup>30</sup> In *Art*, Bell writes: '[T]o appreciate a work of art we need to bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man's [*sic.*] activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life.' Bell, *Art*, p. 25. This statement could not contrast more abruptly with Woolf's engagement with the visual arts as well as her understanding of the processes of reading, in which she encourages participation on the part of the reader.

attention to the utilitarianism of material objects, challenges Bell's aestheticism by foregrounding the narratorial potential of all objects and forms.

### The notes accumulate

After drafting the plan, Woolf began writing the novel the following day on April 16<sup>th</sup>. On the second page of the manuscript she writes the title of the novel at the top of the page. Unlike many of her other major works, including *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *The Waves* (1931), the title of the novel remained unchanged throughout the text's composition.<sup>31</sup> Woolf uses roman numerals to demarcate chapters, which is unusual given her intention to relinquish the restrictions of the thirty-two-chapter structure of her previous novels, as Briggs suggests. The chapters of the *Jacob's Room* manuscript, however, are significantly short in length. Chapter one of the *avant-texte* consists of just two full pages of writing and two half-filled pages of notes and broken sentences. At the opening of the published edition of the novel, Jacob is missing, and his mother and younger brother Archer frantically call out in search for him. His absence at the opening of the text anticipates the closing of the narrative in which the spaces he occupied remain empty after his death. Woolf opens the draft with Jacob fleeing the light of the lighthouse at a beach near his home in Scarborough. This, Kate Flint suggests, 'foregrounds Jacob's own anxious perception, his fears of isolation and the repulsion which rewards his attempt to seek security in a woman.'<sup>32</sup> Why Jacob should fear light emitted from a lighthouse remains ambiguous, but his isolation on the beach at the opening of the manuscript creates an ominous sense of foreboding:

After him came the dark ~~fronds~~ [shiny] things that took  
two or three huge ~~strides~~ [paces] after him & then stopped. ~~But~~

<sup>31</sup> It was characteristic of Woolf to write several working titles for her novels early in the writing of the manuscript draft. In volume one of the manuscript of *The Waves*, for example, Woolf lists six preliminary titles, including 'Autobiography', 'Moments of Being', 'The Life of Anybody', and 'The Moths'; the text's final title was not solidified until the third manuscript volume, of seven, was composed.

<sup>32</sup> Kate Flint, 'Revising *Jacob's Room*: Virginia Woolf, Women and Language', *The Review of English Studies*, 42, 167 (August, 1991), 361-79 (361).

pointing at him across the sea came the light from the lighthouse; ~~which when it had reached him [it] went out; Then it came again which touched him & then stopped [went out].~~ The light was the ~~worst most frightening;~~ – which, when it had reached him went out; ~~& came again.~~ This was the worst ~~of all,~~ for this light was the one that came in at the nursery window. Here it was ~~loose~~ [wild]. (*JRH*, p. 2)<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to Mrs Ramsay who, in *To the Lighthouse*, identifies with the light emitted from the lighthouse, the light here terrifies Jacob.<sup>34</sup> Animated, a movement of the light pursues Jacob in ‘[paces] after him’; Woolf’s cancellation, here, of ‘strides’ to ‘paces’ exaggerates the threat Jacob perceives in the light. Fearing that the light is ‘pointing directly at him’, singling him out as the only person on the beach, Jacob runs from it ‘as fast as he could’ (*JRH*, p. 2). The light presented here anticipates Woolf’s famous depiction of the light above Cambridge, which shines beacon-like into the night’s sky above the spires of the city. In the manuscript draft of the text, the parallels between the lighthouse at the text’s opening and the light of Cambridge is even more apparent. Woolf writes: ‘They say that the sky is the same everywhere. Travellers, the shipwrecked, ~~exi~~ exiles, draw comfort from the thought, & no doubt ~~in~~ if you are of mystical tendency, consolation. [...] But above Cambridge – anyhow above the roof of Kings College Chapel – there is a difference. Out at sea ~~the~~ a great city will cast a brightness up into the ~~æ~~ air’ (*JRH*, p. 27). Here, the city acts as a lighthouse, casting its beam into the sky to guide the ‘shipwrecked’, who look to Cambridge for intellectual consolation. Woolf uses this metaphor of light to depict the ‘enlightened’ space of Cambridge: ‘Thick wax candles stand straight’ in the chapel, while young men in ‘white gowns’ listen to a sermon from ‘the great white book’ (*JRH*, p. 27). Jacob will become part of this intellectual world, and as Kate Flint points out, the

<sup>33</sup> In quoting from the transcription of the manuscript I have followed the conventions used by Edward L. Bishop the editor. The words that are included in parenthesis are interlinear insertions.

<sup>34</sup> ‘[P]ausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of three, which was her stroke[.] ... one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke.’ (*TL*, p. 70)

patriarchal ideologies that Cambridge as an institution upholds, will ultimately initiate the war, that will bring about Jacob's demise.<sup>35</sup>

From the opening of her draft material, then, Woolf anticipates the death of her central figure around which the events of the novel unfold. Choosing to excise the initial opening of the novel, Woolf's false start was re-written on the following page, but the intensive cancellations, uncharacteristically squiggled horizontally down four lines from the top of the page, demonstrate her frustration with the opening of her text. On the fifth page of her manuscript, Woolf abruptly ends the draft of her first chapter mid-sentence. After his troubling encounter with the ominous light of the lighthouse, Jacob is returned to the safety of his room, the first of many rooms he will come to inhabit throughout the text. He sees the solidity of the objects in his room fade as he falls asleep: '[H]e saw ~~the edge of the chest of drawers, a corner~~ a line; & following that up came to purple things; Oh these were the ~~anemone~~ flowers that mother had picked; the petals were falling; one [purple thing] floated & ~~missed~~ [missed the chest of drawers] fell down down –' (*JRH*, p. 5). Cancelling the 'chest of drawers' for 'flowers', which then become 'one [purple thing]', Woolf displays a tendency towards the abstraction of colour that she would later deploy in both *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. While Mrs Ramsay is represented by a 'triangular purple shape' in Lily Briscoe's painting (*TL*, p. 58), in *The Waves* Susan uses the colour purple to signify her emotion: 'I shall be sullen, storm-tinted and all one purple' (*TW*, p. 104).<sup>36</sup> Woolf's transmutation of subjectivity into colour enables her to further breach the distinction between the subject and the observable and material environment. But her reference to the falling petals at this moment in *Jacob's Room* also anticipates the image of the red carnation in *The Waves*, which becomes an emblem of the multitudinous nature of subjectivity: the flower is 'many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves – a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution' (*TW*, p. 99-100). After the death of Percival, Bernard imagines its

<sup>35</sup> Kate Flint, 'Introduction', in *Jacob's Room* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. xii-xxviii (p. xx).

<sup>36</sup> Woolf's use of colour in both these texts is considered in chapter four and five of the thesis.

petals falling as his ‘contribution’ to the image is lost. Woolf’s almost imagist use of the petals falling at this point in *Jacob’s Room* also foregrounds Jacob’s own demise. Like Percival, Jacob is the absent centre in the novel, whose subjectivity is never revealed to us. Just as the speakers of *The Waves* bring their own ‘contribution’ to the image of the carnation, both Jacob and Percival are represented by other subjectivities, never their own.<sup>37</sup> Woolf’s image of the falling petal in her manuscript draws a further parallel between the two figures, signalling their absence from their respective texts. The image of visually reading a material object (here petals falling from a flower) speaks directly to Woolf’s theory of reading as a complex and subjective process. Like the mark in ‘The Mark on the Wall’, Jacob influences multiple and varied readings of his identity, and Woolf refrains from providing a static definition of him.

Woolf began writing the second chapter of the text immediately after the closure of the first. However, as Woolf progresses through the composition of the novel, her text becomes increasingly fragmentary. The end of chapter two, the handwriting of which suggests it was written in haste, closes with a conversation between Mrs Flanders and Captain Barfoot. Deciding whether or not to send Jacob to Cambridge, the chapter ends with unresolved contemplation: ‘The Captain stirred his tea. (*JRH*, p. 24).<sup>38</sup> What is striking about the chapters in the manuscript of the text is the fact that they do not necessarily anticipate the events that follow in the narrative. Between the second and third chapter, time has elapsed several years or so. In chapter three, Woolf shifts to ‘an elderly lady with grey hair, & a young man ~~between~~ of about eighteen or a twenty’ (*JRH*, p. 25), who we later learn is Jacob on his way to university at Cambridge. Not only does Woolf withhold information from her readers until the event takes place, her

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<sup>37</sup> By returning to the manuscript version of *Jacob’s Room*, Alex Zwerdling considers the similarities between Jacob and Percival, and foregrounds Woolf’s conscious excision of Jacob’s subjectivity: ‘The inner lives of Jacob and Percival remain a mystery. [...] Woolf deliberately minimized the reader’s access to Jacob’s thoughts. [...] Again and again, Woolf eliminates the vestiges of Jacob’s inner life.’ Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 68-9.

<sup>38</sup> Woolf’s use of short sentences to draw narratives to a close is a convention she deploys in her most famous works, including *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *The Waves* (1931). *Mrs Dalloway* ends with the sentence: ‘For there she was.’ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 174; *The Waves* concludes: ‘The waves broke on the shore.’ (*TW*, p. 238).

manipulation of time, as it shifts violently forward, further adds to the fragmentary nature of the work. The chapter is one of the shortest of the *avant-texte* of *Jacob's Room*. Consisting of just two pages of hand-written text, in Woolf's revisionary process it was amalgamated with chapter four and published in this format. Jacob's journey to Cambridge is told from the perspective of Mrs Norman, a figure who appears only at this instance in the text. She is almost a mirror image of the unnamed narrator of Woolf's short fiction 'An Unwritten Novel', who misinterprets the people she meets on a train from London to Brighton. In the short fiction, Woolf's foregrounds the processes involved in reading one's environment as she does in 'The Mark on the Wall' and 'Solid Objects', but in this text she pays particular attention to the interactions between people who occupy the same spaces. In her attempt to comprehend the figure of Minnie Marsh, the narrator questions: 'Have I read you right? But the human face at the top of the fullest sheet of print holds more, withholds more.'<sup>39</sup> Drawing a parallel between the human subject and the printed word, Woolf's narrative suggests that reading is not solely the interpretation of language.

'An Unwritten Novel' is a fiction in which Woolf demonstrates the various processes of reading that continually takes place in the lived environment. As Randall notes: 'Thinking, like reading, is not something we do when we are not living, or having experiences; both these processes are part of everyday life.'<sup>40</sup> In both 'An Unwritten Novel' and *Jacob's Room*, Woolf draws attention to the similarities between reading and thinking, and in doing so she foregrounds the narratorial potential of subjects, objects as well as written language. But her representation of the subjective experience of reading complicates this interaction by questioning the validity of assumptions. In *Jacob's Room*, Mrs Norman misinterprets the innocuous Jacob and feels threatened by him. 'Touching the spring of her dispatch box, the lady seemed to ~~inspect the~~ search for a something, though as a matter of fact she was only deciding [...] whether her French dictionary or her scent bottle would serve her best in an attack by the young man in the

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<sup>39</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'An Unwritten Novel', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, pp. 112-21 (p. 117).

<sup>40</sup> Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*, p. 169.

corner.’ (*JRH*, p. 25). This passage from *Jacob’s Room* can be read as an intertext for Woolf’s earlier fiction, and a revision of her earlier work. Just as the narrator of ‘An Unwritten Novel’ composes an elaborate and troubled story about the woman she encounters momentarily on a train, here Mrs Norman, whose subjectivity is presented solely in this section of text, functions as a means of exposing alternative perspectives which work to challenge a coherent representation of Jacob himself.

Considering ‘An Unwritten Novel’ alongside this section of *Jacob’s Room* demonstrates that the literary practices that Woolf developed during the early years of the Press provided her with a foundation from which she could develop her new and experimental approach to writing. Challenging the natural progression of linear time in her emphasis on form and space, *Jacob’s Room* is similar to the modernist short story in its rebellion against coherence. As Clare Hanson notes, the modernist short story disrupts the notion of a conclusive plot:

The pleasing shape and coherence of the traditional short story represented a falsification of the discrete and heterogeneous nature of experience. Such stories relied on a too-readily and facile identification of casual relationships. And the achieved and rounded finality of the tale was distrusted, for “story” in this sense seemed to convey the misleading notion of something finished, absolute and wholly understood.<sup>41</sup>

Dissatisfied with the finite progression of ‘traditional’ fictions, Woolf’s work undermines the misleading story-telling of conventional narratives; concerned with singular moments and fragments of experience, she concentrates upon, to use a phrase from ‘The Mark on the Wall’, ‘the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair’ (*MW*, p. 5). The act of reading is often interrupted in Woolf’s short fictions, which points towards alternative visual stimuli that can be read and interpreted. The narrator of ‘The Mark on the Wall’ looks up from the pages of her book in order to read the mark, while in ‘Solid Objects’ the lump of glass acts as ‘a natural stopping place for the young man’s eyes when they wandered from his book’ (*SO*, p. 104). At the opening of ‘An Unwritten Novel’, the unnamed narrator’s eyes ‘slide above the paper’s edge’

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<sup>41</sup> Clare Hanson, ‘Moments of Being: Modernist Short Fiction’, in *Short Stories and Short Fictions, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1985), pp. 55-81 (p. 55).



as she looks at Minnie Marsh ('UN', p. 112). Feeling unable to communicate with each other in the presence of the male passengers, the two women stare at each other: '[S]he gazed into my eyes as if searching any sediment of courage at the depths of them and damping it to clay' ('UN', p. 113). By interrupting the act of reading print, Woolf suggests alternative modes of interpretation that centre around the observation of people and material objects. There is also a tension here between solidity and disintegration as the narrator imagines her 'courage' in palpable terms. In their attempt to grasp and make sense of each other, the narrator suggests her ability to solidify Marsh ('damping [her] to clay'), but she also highlights her potential to remain nothing but sediment. The narrator rapidly flits from one definition of 'Miss Marsh' to another as she attempts to read her, but this fragmentary reading is undermined at the end of the narrative when Minnie Marsh leaves the train to meet her son who is waiting for her: 'Off they go, down the road, side by side... Well, my world's done for! What do I stand on? What do I know? That's not Minnie' ('UN', p. 121). The text makes the reader conscious of the act of misreading, but its form anticipates *Jacob's Room* in the presentation of various points of view, and the material objects that signify alternative stories, which work to undermine the authority of a single narrative perspective.

Woolf's fragmentary structure of *Jacob's Room*, which was created in the manuscript draft, challenges the linear sequencing of events that usually characterise the progression of a realist novel. In their seminal text on literary theory and criticism, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle propose that: 'The simplest way to define narrative is as a series of events in a specific order – with a beginning, a middle, and an end. [...] Narrative, however, is characterized by its foregrounding of a series of events or actions which are connected in time.' Using 'The Mark on the Wall' as an example of a text that purposely distorts conventional narrative structures, Bennett and Royle argue that Woolf's 'text is only readable insofar as it exploits our expectations

of narrative sequence.’<sup>42</sup> In a similar sense, *Jacob’s Room* distorts readers’ expectations in presenting passages of text that do not always correspond with those that precede or succeed them. Each literary fragment of the narrative can be read in isolation from the others. As Zwerdling acknowledges, the text is built of ‘narrative units’, two- or three-page sections that ‘do not obviously connect to the one before or after.’<sup>43</sup> In response to Zwerdling, Pamela J. Transue suggests that the fragments of the narrative purposely resist the natural progression of time:

Woolf concentrates on discrete moments, evoking a scene and a given character’s response without feeling compelled to move the plot forward. [...] Her narrator, no longer encumbered by the rigid constraints of conventional plot, was free to dwell on whatever impressions suited her, without regard for moving the plot forward.<sup>44</sup>

Transue’s statement draws attention to the episodic design of the narrative, suggesting that the narrator’s new-found freedom allows her to focus on the various ‘impressions’ that catch her attention. While this implies a use of literary impressionism, the text’s attention to everyday materialism works against this notion of a passive, impressionist engagement with modern life. Woolf’s manipulation of the form of the novel fits with the Post-Impressionist agenda to transform everyday artefacts, and to offer new ways of engaging with materialism.

Sim’s definition of Post-Impressionism resonates with Woolf’s manipulation of narrative form. Post-Impressionism, she suggests, ‘re-present[s] common objects and everyday scenes [...] through innovative approaches to form and colour. Rather than transforming the everyday [...] they wanted to change its manner of presentation in painting and to reinvigorate our relationship to our everyday, lived environment[.]’<sup>45</sup> By presenting dislocated ‘scenes’ in succession, the narrative influences the reader to think about the varied experience of modern life from multiple perspectives. While the focus of the narrative is Jacob himself, readers are not offered a coherent account of his character. Instead, the text draws particular attention to his material environment

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<sup>42</sup> Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, ‘Narrative’, in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (London: Pearson, 2004), pp. 52-59 (pp. 53-54).

<sup>43</sup> Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, p. 69.

<sup>44</sup> Transue, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>45</sup> Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, pp. 62-63.

as a means of reading him as a subject. John Lurz highlights the prevalence of books in Jacob's lived spaces, suggesting that the possession of certain literary texts encourages the narrator to 'stereotype' him: 'the narrator approaches Jacob's books with some preconceived notions, a set of expectations she is looking to the books to fulfil.'<sup>46</sup> Jacob's rooms and the material objects contained within them, present a variety of artefacts through which we can read the central subject. But rather than offer a coherent representation of Jacob, Woolf encourages her readers to interpret the subject through his everyday lived spaces. Like the elusive mark in 'The Mark on the Wall', the narrator of *Jacob's Room* is unable to provide a fixed description of him. He is the absence at the centre of the narrative, which readers are encouraged to fill with their own meaning. As Alex Oxner writes, Jacob becomes 'a cipher for a broader, dissociative feeling and reflection on loss.'<sup>47</sup> Characterising Jacob as an absent presence in the novel, Woolf makes her reader conscious of the subjective processes of interpretation, transforming our notion of the subject as a static and unchangeable being.

Woolf also undermines the linearity of narrative progression by offering multiple perspectives, locational changes and shifts in time, which forms the basis of her fragmentary formal design for the text. As Christine Froula suggests, drafts and fragments 'become modernity's quintessential form [...] the major epistemological shift of the modern period [is] the dissolving of the object as such into action, process, a history in which ghostly traces of what is not there can resonate almost as palpably as what is.'<sup>48</sup> Jacob's absence at the end of the narrative is made profound through his mother's engagement with his material possessions, but materiality is not always presented in the text as a marker of absence. Rather than 'dissolve' the object/subject, as Froula suggests, materiality is used by Woolf to signify presence and

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<sup>46</sup> Lurz, *The Death of the Book: Modernist Novels and the Time of Reading*, p. 111.

<sup>47</sup> Alex Oxner, 'Characterizing Absence: Virginia Woolf's New Elegy in *Jacob's Room*', *The Explicator*, 72.3 (2014), 210-14 (210).

<sup>48</sup> Christine Froula, 'Modernity, Drafts, Genetic Criticism: On the Virtual Lives of James Joyce's *Villanelle*', *Yale French Studies*, 89 (1996), 113-29 (117).

communication. In a fragment of the narrative from chapter eight, the narrator considers the materiality of letters:

Let us consider letters [...], for to see one's own envelope on another's table is to realize how soon deeds sever and become alien. Then at last the power of the mind to quit the body is manifest, and perhaps we fear or hate or wish annihilated this phantom of ourselves, lying on the table. [...] The hand in them is scarcely perceptible, let alone the voice or the scowl. [...] These [letters] lace our days together and make of life a perfect globe. [...] the notes accumulate. (*JR*, p. 125)

Here the text suggests that the handwritten letter is a physical extension of the body. Its pages have the ability to transfer the 'hand', 'scowl' and even the 'voice' of the writer. Woolf's carefully selected terms here relate to three forms of communication that can be conveyed in writing: the inscribed 'hand', the visual gesture of the 'scowl', and the audible 'voice' of speech. Yet in writing a letter, the text suggests that there is a violent severance of these aspects of the self from the body, which is transferred to the recipient. Witnessing one's own hand-written letter unopened upon another's table is an experience that dislocates the thinking subject (the mind) from the body (here represented in the materiality of the letter). The narrator fears the ghostly phantom of herself contained within the letter because it positions herself as an 'absence', even in her own presence. Like the traces of the past that can be found in the materiality of the present, the letter similarly makes present the subjectivity of another. Woolf demonstrates how the subject's interaction with materiality (here in the writing of a letter) can extend the self: the letter becomes a material representation of the subject, enabling her to transfer part of herself to the recipient. Rather than consider material artefacts as anterior to the self, as Froula suggests, solid objects contain, convey and communicate subject hood. Letters and accumulated notes create unity; they 'lace together' disparate selves, making of life 'a perfect globe'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> At the close of *The Waves*, Bernard imagines life in similar terms: 'Let us again pretend that life is a solid substance, shaped like a globe, which we turn about in our fingers' (*TW*, p. 201). Later he notes: 'The crystal the globe of life as one calls it, far from being hard and cold to the touch, has walls of thinnest air. If I press them all will burst. Whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle[.]' (*TW*, p. 205). While Woolf initially presents the 'globe' as a 'solid substance', it soon loses its firm palpability with walls of thin air. This oscillation between substance and insubstantiality fits with Woolf's conception of the 'integument' as an image for textuality as a material exchange. For more on this see the introduction to the thesis.

### White space and blue

The accumulation of letters in the narrative also speaks directly to the fragmentary form of the manuscript. While the structure of *Jacob's Room* owes much to the short story, Woolf's draft material reveals how she visually developed the form of the novel. The disjointedness of the draft, and the spacing that Woolf demarcates in the manuscript, is translated into the published edition of the novel. The sequencing of the three manuscript volumes correspond almost exactly to the Hogarth Press first edition, although as Edward L. Bishop notes, 'much was expanded in the intervening drafts.'<sup>50</sup> At the beginning of chapter three in the first manuscript volume, Woolf draws roman numerals to signify the chapter, but here she surrounds them with four crosses, making a diamond formation. Next to this Woolf draws a triangular shape consisting of three Xs or crosses. On first examination, it might seem that Woolf drew these crosses to procrastinate, to stall the progression of her writing. However, the lack of editorial signifiers at this point in the manuscript (cancellations and interlineations, for example) suggest a fluidity in her composition rather than a rupturing pause. Woolf's visual markers in an otherwise unillustrated manuscript convey a different significance directly related to the formal structuring of the novel. In printing and publishing, 'XX' signifies a single space. Woolf's use of these markers in her manuscript, therefore, demonstrates that she was thinking about the printed format of the text even at the writing stages of its production. Apart from this instance, the marks appear at several points in the manuscript and are deployed by Woolf to divide passages of text, creating a sense of disintegration in the linear structuring of the narrative.

Woolf uses these Xs most frequently in chapter eleven of the manuscript. Written on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1920 at Monk's House, the chapter takes place after the Cambridge section of the novel; Jacob and his friend Timmy Durrant are sailing to Cornwall to visit Durrant's family who live

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<sup>50</sup> Bishop, 'Introduction', p. x. On occasion throughout the manuscript, Woolf would roughly sketch the outline of a scene on the verso of a page and would later expand the depiction in both the manuscript and the typescript. For example, the text's description of the sky above Cambridge in chapter three of the published edition was expanded considerably when compared to the original draft in the manuscript.

there. Aside from the prolific use of Xs, what is most striking about the chapter is the fact that Woolf begins to incorporate self-commentary within her drafting of the narrative. These statements often convey Woolf's dissatisfaction and frustration at her inability to find adequate sentences:

Innumerable are the sentences with which this chapter might begin, & to tell the truth some of them are rejected for no better reason than that they ~~are~~ display an ignorance discreditable, indeed disgraceful; ~~but~~ inevitable, however, considering the present state of things. The rest As for the rest each one of them ends with a plain note of interrogation. Of course that is the cottage plainly enough & those {on the bench} are pans in which Mrs Pascoe has {presumably} boiled her cream; the cottage is whitewashed; & the cabbage garden enclosed by a stone wall; & the hill slopes off to a cliff & the cliff falls to the sea, which one hears sounding and dashing {on the rocks} beneath {&} ~~as one~~ sees it spread ~~blue~~ to the horizon. Seats have been {hollowed} ~~shaped~~ in the granite by long rain, & the grey lichen fills them, as with & there sitting, time now its [*sic.*] the sailing ship you see watch, now the bumble bee swinging on the fox glove. (*JRH*, p. 54)

It is uncharacteristic for Woolf to self-critique her work in her draft material, as she would usually do this privately in her diary. Frustrated that she had paid little attention to her novel for the past three weeks, she uses her criticisms as a way of returning to the composition of her narrative. Following on from the declaration that her writing is 'disgraceful', Woolf returns to her fictional narrative. One of the most striking things about the passage above is the way in which Woolf seems to be visualising the scene while writing: '[T]hat is the cottage plain enough & those [...] are the pans in which Mrs Pascoe has {presumably} boiled her cream[.]' The interlineal use of the word 'presumably' is odd here; given that Woolf is the writer, there is no need for her to make presumptions about her own novel. Woolf's self-commentary in the *Jacob's Room* manuscript undermines the authority she has over her own work; she characterises herself as a translator of sorts, who must inscribe her visually creative impulses upon the page.

Woolf's close attention to colour also signifies the centrality of the visual in her drafting of the text; blue and white are the predominant colours of Woolf's palette at the opening of her narrative. The attention that she draws to space here is also significant, and the manuscript reveals her mapping of the landscape (the cliffs, the sea and the horizon) prior to composition. Within this drafted plan, Woolf also makes the reader conscious of her or his own mode of

perception, as she addresses them directly: ‘you [...] watch’ the sailing ship, and ‘now the bumble bee swinging on the fox glove’ (*JRH*, p. 54). This metatextual passage anticipates Lily Briscoe’s conception of her painting in the novel in *To the Lighthouse*: ‘[T]he colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly’s wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral. Of all that only a few random marks scrawled upon the canvas remained’ (*TL*, p. 54). The distinction here between Lily’s nascent ‘marks’ upon her canvas and her colourful vision of her work reflects Woolf’s own compositional process. Like Lily who thinks her painting ‘infinitely bad’, Woolf’s dissatisfaction prompts her to formulate a visual image of the landscape in which her narrative takes place.

In switching from one mode of writing to another, and blurring the boundary between text and metatextual content, Woolf’s draft material reveals the processes that influence and condition the text’s composition. After writing the plan above on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1920, Woolf began re-writing chapter eleven on 28<sup>th</sup> July. Here, Woolf returns to Mrs Pascoe’s cottage, but she continues to critique her own work, sewing sentences of self-criticism into the textual narrative of the novel. Woolf writes, ‘[Mrs Pascoe] is alone in the house. Her husband {~~will~~ be yet at the harvest} – ~~but he is dead~~. [...] Perhaps – But since the first sentence holds good, this is ~~in~~ guess work, & the only ~~truth~~ statement which can be reached for is that a steamer, probably bound for Cardiff, {is} is now crossing the horizon, while near at hand, a fox glove swings like a cathedral bell with a bumble bee for clapper’ (*JRH*, p. 55). Although Woolf re-works some of the images from her plan on the previous page, she continues to express the difficulty she has in finding the right sentences to translate her creativity. Shifting abruptly to self-critique, Woolf notes that the ‘first sentence holds good’ but her process is ‘guess work’. There is a sense of uncertainty at this point in the text’s composition: the steamer is ‘probably’ bound for Cardiff, and Woolf seems uncertain whether Mrs Pascoe’s husband is ‘at the harvest’ or dead. On the following page of the narrative, Woolf further interrupts her work with a plan for the following section. She indents two bullet-pointed sentences from the body of her text, which continues to blur the distinction

between preparatory planning and composition. Continuing with her use of blue and white, Woolf depicts the white cottages on the 'edge of the cliff' and the blue of Mrs Pascoe's dress:

No one objects to a blue print dress & white apron in the cottage garden.  
 - She has to draw her water from a well in the garden. –  
 - Very lonely it must be in winter, with the wind  
 sweeping over these hills, & the waves dashing on the rocks.  
 † Having drawn her water, Mrs Pascoe went in again[.] (*JRH*, p. 56-7)

The fragmentary nature of this passage demonstrates the way in which Woolf interrupts her text in order to make note of an aspect she intends to include at a later point. Without clarifying that Mrs Pascoe is the woman presented here in a blue dress, Woolf records the activity that she undertakes later in the passage.

Presenting images in rapid succession, the draft material is reminiscent of the erratic narration of 'The Mark on the Wall' and 'An Unwritten Novel', but here Woolf's own voice merges with the text at certain points, as she continually re-writes and re-drafts throughout her writing process. Although she excises her self-commentary during the revisionary stages of composition, Woolf's insertion of herself in the text seems peculiar given her aim to refrain from egotism in her work. As the diary entry that marks the inception of the text suggests:

What the unity will be I have yet to discover: the theme is blank to me; but I see immense possibilities in the form I hit upon more or less by chance 2 weeks ago. I suppose the danger is the damned egotistical self; which ruins [James] Joyce & [Dorothy] Richardson to my mind: is one pliant & rich enough to provide a wall for the book from oneself without its becoming, as in Joyce & Richardson, narrowing & restricting? My hope is that I've learnt my business sufficiently now [...]. (*D2*, p. 14)

Intending to build a wall between herself and the novel, Woolf aims to remove traces of her own voice from the published edition. Although she fails to elaborate upon what she means by the 'egotistical self' that she finds distasteful in her contemporary writers, the idea of building a wall between the writer and the subject fits with the text's deliberation not to present a coherent account of Jacob. Woolf presents to her readers flat surfaces rather than depth, enabling them to interpret the numerous images that are presented within the narrative. This she achieves by deploying the form she discovered in the drafting of her short fiction, particularly that of 'An



Unwritten Novel', which purposely undermines the reader's reliance upon a narrator to guide them through a text.

Woolf's manipulation of form in *Jacob's Room*, the breaking up of her narrative into various sections, similarly undermines the influence of a single narrative perspective. Although she uses crosses to conclude passages of text she found particularly challenging to write, later in the manuscript she uses these markings to shape her narrative into shorter, more succinct, textual entities. In chapter seventeen of the manuscript, for example, it becomes clear that Woolf is using these marks as a means of structuring her narrative. Having briefly introduced the character Fanny Filmer (who becomes Fanny Elmer in the published edition), Woolf drafts her passage through a 'disused graveyard in the Parish of St Pancras' (*JRH*, p. 159). She passes beneath the window of Jacob's room immediately before the narrator shifts her attention to Jacob. While this transition from one character to another is recognisable in the published edition, the manuscript reveals how Woolf used her X spatial markers to signify the progression of the narrative. As Fanny rapidly makes her way through the graveyard, she passes through the exterior spaces beneath Jacob's window:

Of course, ~~the its~~ very in this dusk, rapid movement, quick glances, and soaring hopes come naturally. [...]

~~X X X X X~~

She passed beneath Jacob's window.

. X . . X . . . X .X

The house was flat, dark, & silent. Jacob, however, was at home, sitting in his back room. Mrs Whitethorn had brought up his tea. (*JRH*, p. 159)

Without coming into contact with each other at this point in the narrative, Jacob and Fanny occupy the same space momentarily before Fanny leaves and Jacob remains alone in his room. Woolf shifts from exterior to interior spaces, and uses the Xs to signify this transition.

While Woolf surrounds the roman numerals signifying chapter three with Xs, in chapter eleven she uses the same marks for a different purpose. Concluding her description of Mrs

Pascoe's cottage, Woolf inserts a line of crosses to distinguish this passage of text from its successor:

There she stood, shading her eyes & looking out to sea. ~~Centuries have passed, & yet as for saying what she saw or thought as she stood there, we are~~

X X X X X X X

Yes, it is much easier to {note} follow the flight of the bee, or the note colour of the waves, than to conjecture ~~what she thinks~~. the thought in her brain, or the light in her eyes, or what it is that remains constant, ~~through~~ behind everything. For the millionth time she looks at the sea. Probably this last look ~~is~~ confirms or alters something[.] (JRH, p. 56)

Uncharacteristically at this point, Woolf resists her tendency towards interiority in order to avoid 'conjecture' about 'what it is that remains constant' in Mrs Pascoe's character. The heavy lines of cancellation here suggest Woolf's dissatisfaction with the drafting of this sentence, and in order to progress from this juncture she interrupts her writing by inscribing seven Xs on the page of her manuscript. On her return to writing, she adopts a self-critical voice in order to make note of what approach is 'easier': to follow the flight of the bee, to note the colour of the waves, and to focus on Mrs Pascoe's view of the landscape. Rather than submerging herself in the language of interiority that comes to characterise her later works, such as *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, here Woolf's emphasis is upon the landscape and the observable environment, which demonstrates her foregrounding of the visual and material aspects of reality. Concentrating on surfaces rather than depth, she focuses on the superficial experience of colour rather than its emotional effects on the thinking subject. A butterfly passes Mrs Pascoe, but the narrator purposely refrains from conveying the effects of the colours of its wings:

A peacock butterfly {now} occupied ~~almost~~ the ~~entire~~ teasel [*sic.*]; a fresh, newly emerged, as the blue & chocolate down on his wings testified. Yet no butterfly does more than stain a patch on ~~one's~~ the retina. (JRH, p. 57)

While the transient butterfly flits towards the teasel, the colour of its wings retain permanence by staining the eye. In 'Solid Objects' Woolf explores the way in which the body can become defamiliarised through an engagement with colour; here, however, she positions the body as a

surface upon which colour can be inscribed. Significantly, the blue upon the butterfly's wing mirrors the colour of Mrs Pascoe's dress in the preceding passage, so that colour conveys a sense of continuity between the two disconnected fragments of text.

Woolf's resistance to depicting Mrs Pascoe's thoughts is significant here when read alongside a section from the essay 'Pictures and Portraits', which was published in *Athenaeum* in January 1920, a few months before she began drafting *Jacob's Room*. As the narrator experiences an exhibition of the work of Edmond X. Kapp, she suggests:

Let us wash the roof of our eyes with colour; let us dive until the deep seas close above our heads. That these sensations are not aesthetic becomes evident soon enough, for after a prolonged dumb gaze, the very paint on the canvas begins to distil itself into words – sluggish, slow-dropping words that would, if they could, stain the page with colour.<sup>51</sup>

Anticipating the impression of the butterfly's blue upon the eyes of Mrs Pascoe, here the colours of the art gallery wash the eye and stain the page. Woolf's comparison between sight and the act of reading and writing is not uncommon (as several chapters in this thesis demonstrate), but here the vague distinction between paint and ink draw parallel between her conceptualisation of painting and literature. The paint, she suggests, can be distilled into ink, which can then be imprinted or inscribed upon the page. While Clive Bell challenges description in painting, Woolf's essay addresses his subject-devoid engagement with art. Bell suggests that '[a]rt transports us from the world of man's [*sic.*] activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests, our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life.'<sup>52</sup> Mrs Pascoe's silence as she views the landscape is mirrored in the initial silence of the visitor to the gallery, whose offering of a 'penny bunch of violets' is rejected by the 'indifferent' portraits' ('PP', p. 163).<sup>53</sup> The observer is conscious that 'in private

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<sup>51</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Pictures and Portraits' (1920), in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume 3, 1919-1924*, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 1989), pp. 163-66 (p. 164).

<sup>52</sup> Bell, *Art*, p.5.

<sup>53</sup> Woolf re-uses this image in *The Waves*. After learning of the death of Percival, Bernard visits an art gallery in attempt to make sense of his grief; Rhoda, after attending a concert at Wigmore Hall, offers a penny bunch of violets to the waters of the Thames (*TW*, p. 123; p. 130).

stress or public disaster we can wring no message from [painting],’ and in viewing them makes the subject ‘fade and dwindle and dissolve’ (‘PP’, pp. 163-64). Although the tone adopted in the essay is comically mocking, Woolf’s insistence on the symbiosis between painting and language undermines Bell’s concept of ‘aesthetic exaltation’ in which the subject’s rapturous response to paint cannot be translated into words. In *Jacob’s Room*, Woolf plays upon the notion of silent perception by purposely refraining from conveying Mrs Pascoe’s interior sensation of blue.

The colour blue also provides the backdrop for much of the novel; at the opening of the published edition, it is the first colour Woolf presents in the text, and it is closely associated with paper and ink. As Betty Flanders composes a letter to an unknown recipient, her pen halts abruptly on the page:

Slowly welling from the point of her gold nib, pale blue ink dissolved the full stop; for there her pen stuck; her eyes fixed, and tears slowly filled them. The entire bay quivered; the lighthouse wobbled; and she has an illusion that the mast of Mr Connor’s little yacht was bending like a wax candle in the sun. [...] She winked again. The mast was straight; the waves were regular; the lighthouse was upright; but the blot had spread.<sup>54</sup>

Woolf refrains from providing any detail about the content of the letter; she chooses instead to focus on the substance of the ‘pale blue ink’, which is closely associated with Mrs Flanders’ tears. ‘The fluids of composition and of sentiment seem interchangeable’, as Kate Flint suggests.<sup>55</sup> The emotional responses of the body in this passage directly influence writing and vision: the ink blot obscures the clarity of the letter, while Mrs Flanders’ tears distort her perception of the lighthouse. At the very opening of the text, Woolf foregrounds the relationship between the corporeality of the subject and the perceived environment (as she does in her short fictions), but here she also positions the act of writing within this interaction. By drawing attention to the mutability of ink, Woolf makes her readers conscious of the materiality of the written word, and how sight and vision are central to the act of reading and writing. While she places an emphasis

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<sup>54</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 3. All further references to the published novel are to this edition and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>55</sup> Kate Flint, ‘Revising *Jacob’s Room*: Virginia Woolf, Women and Language’, 361.

on the manipulation of material form (the bending of the mast of the yacht, for example), the grammatical structure of this passage is also reminiscent of Woolf's fragmentary design for her novel. Constructed of distinct clauses, which are strung together by her frequent use of the semi-colon, the passage presents a series of images, parenthetically contained by the blot of ink, which swells at the opening and spreads at the close.

Woolf's writing continually draws attention to the ways in which the formal structures of the text are reflective of its literary concerns. Structure, form and space, for Woolf, are inherently part of the text's system of representation, conveying the rupturing and multi-faceted experience of modernity. Fragmentation, as Froula suggests, is modernism's 'quintessential form'.<sup>56</sup> The increasingly disjointed clauses at this point in the novel directly mirror Betty Flanders' attempt to control her grief. While Woolf's short fictions, as the first chapter of this thesis suggests, enabled her to experiment with the visuality of print, she continues to do so in her first novel at the Hogarth Press, similarly using blank space as a strategy of representation. Her episodic design enables her to move away from the 'conventional' structures of the 'thirty-two-chapter novel', but she also uses this design to interrupt the expected coherence of familiarity between the reader and the central subject, Jacob. The manuscript version of *Jacob's Room* enables us to read the significance of space and form and a means of conveying both unity and discord simultaneously. While in her plan for the novel, Woolf thought that the 'room' could hold the narrative together, the various narrative voices she introduces within the text continually define and redefine Jacob. It is only at the end of the text that his existence becomes palpable through Mrs Flanders' engagement with her son's material possessions. The final image Woolf presents to the reader is that of Mrs Flanders holding Jacob's shoes as an offering to the reader to examine. Although Woolf never fully characterises Jacob as a coherent subject, his existence as

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<sup>56</sup> Froula, 'Modernity, Drafts, Genetic Criticism: On the Virtual Lives of James Joyce's *Villanelle*', 117.

well as his absence is signified in both the form of the novel (the rupturing gaps in the narrative) of the novel and Woolf's imagistic use of material objects in the novel to signify loss.

### Chapter III:

#### “The Cold Raw Edge of One’s Relinquished Pages”: Reading *Mrs Dalloway* Palimpsestuously

Now I’m sending off Montaigne, & back again tomorrow to *The Hours*, which I was looking at so disconsolately – oh the cold raw edge of one’s relinquished pages – when the house business started this morning. But now I am going to write until we move – 6 weeks straight ahead. I think its [*sic.*] the design that’s good this time – God knows.  
Virginia Woolf, Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1924.<sup>1</sup>

When Woolf drafted this statement in her diary in January 1924, she was already deeply immersed in the composition of *Mrs Dalloway*, her second novel at the Hogarth Press. It was a text, however, that she composed sporadically. With her forthcoming move to Tavistock Square, Woolf submitted her review of Charles Cotton’s recently published translation of the essays of Michel Montaigne, which appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1924. Allowing herself six weeks in which to finalise the first draft of ‘*The Hours*’, Woolf’s diary entry reveals the immense pressure she was under at this point in her writing career. She was also constructing a book of essays which would be published in 1925 as the first volume of *The Common Reader*. As a way of negotiating her various literary commitments, Woolf deployed an unusual writing strategy. This can be observed in ‘*The Hours*’, the manuscript draft of *Mrs Dalloway* located at the British Library. Intersected by the various works that were written alongside it, the manuscript is a composite and disjointed text. Without concluding a passage of ‘*The Hours*’, Woolf would take a new page and begin writing essays and reviews, many of which would become part of *The Common Reader*. She frequently interrupts her work mid-sentence, as she does on page eighty-four of the first volume of the British Library manuscript. Here Woolf shifts from her depiction of Mrs Dalloway’s memory of Sally Seton at Bourton to a discussion of Electra and Clytemnestra, which she would later develop into the essay ‘On Not Knowing Greek’ (1925). Woolf’s decision to compose these textual fragments within the manuscript of her fictional text raises questions about the intertextual conversations between these works, and

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<sup>1</sup> Woolf, *D2*, p. 289.

how the manuscript can be read as a multi-faceted and multi-layered text that spreads beyond the confinements of its bindings. The ‘cold raw edge’ of Woolf’s ‘relinquished pages,’ suggests that the nascent states of her texts are like open and bleeding wounds, with their literary content threatening to seep through their textual borders. This chapter takes this image as its starting point, for in examining Woolf’s compositional practices we can observe how the text transgresses fixity and containment. It suggests that Woolf’s conceptualisation of textuality is mutable influenced by complex interactions between differing textual state and entities.

Brenda R. Silver argues that textual criticism has the potential to offer new ways of reading the printed text by considering the work as a fluid source of limitless creativity, rather than a static and unchanging artefact. She writes: ‘To trace the circumstances and the language that surround and shape the “versioning” of Woolf’s novels is to illustrate the centrality of the critical contexts and historical moment that necessarily connect editing and interpretation.’<sup>2</sup> Silver’s suggestion to read draft material palimpsestuously, as a means of tracing the underlying textual states that resonate within the published edition of a text, can be considered a feminist project in that it challenges the stasis of an established texts by bringing to the surface alternative, submerged creative expressions.<sup>3</sup> While there has been a tendency in Textual Scholarship to assert a distinction between editorial research and interpretative criticism, this chapter realigns these literary practices by demonstrating how Woolf’s compositional processes can offer new ways of reading *Mrs Dalloway*.<sup>4</sup> It will suggest that the multi-faceted nature of the manuscript enables us to read Woolf’s palimpsestuous theorisation of textuality, and how this conditions the aesthetic concerns of the novel, such as the layering of past memory in the

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<sup>2</sup> Brenda R. Silver, ‘Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice: Or, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf Part II’, in *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation*, ed. George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), pp. 193-223 (p. 196).

<sup>3</sup> Silver, *ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> In ‘What is Bibliography?’ W. W. Greg establishes a difference between bibliographic research and literary criticism: ‘To the bibliographer the literary contents of a book is irrelevant. [...] The mere bibliographer who criticises the work he [*sic.*] catalogues is guilty of impertinence: or at best he [*sic.*] is only the systematizer of other men’s [*sic.*] knowledge.’ Greg, ‘What is Bibliography?’, *The Library*, Issue 1 (January, 1913), 39-54 (46).



temporality of the text's present. This enables us to think about the ways earlier textual versions of *Mrs Dalloway* reverberate in the published edition. The nascent versions of the novel not only help us to understand Woolf's literary processes, but also how the networks of tropes that are visible across her works, such as gloves, flowers and silks, are embedded beneath the material surfaces of the published editions. Helen Wussow, the editor of the transcription of the manuscript, draws attention to the conversive nature of the texts contained within the draft material: 'Side by side in her mind, in her diary, and in her notebooks, "The Hours" and *The Common Reader* compliment and expand one another. Through both books we learn how to read, how to interpret a multiple, multi-faceted text.'<sup>5</sup> Thinking about Woolf's textual practice, also provides an alternative theory of reading her work as borderless entities, with the contents of one narrative seeping into others. Wussow stresses the similarities between the figures in *Mrs Dalloway* and those that appear in *The Common Reader*, such as Montaigne, Charlotte Brontë, and the Duchess of Newcastle, suggesting that their common origin in the manuscript has resulted in their cross-characterisation: '[A]ll reside in the "beautiful caves" Woolf creates behind her characters.'<sup>6</sup> Reading *Mrs Dalloway* as a palimpsest allows us to trace how its various iterations and reiterations, from the manuscript version to the short fiction 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' (1923), reverberate throughout the first published edition of the novel.

One of the most difficult aspects in tracing the compositional history of *Mrs Dalloway*, however, is the negotiation of the disparate archives in which the draft material resides. When Leonard Woolf auctioned Woolf's manuscripts in 1957, he sold the main corpus of the drafts, diaries and letters to the rare book dealer Hamill and Baker, based in Chicago. Hamill and Baker subsequently sold Woolf's archive to the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. However, according to her bequest after her death in 1941, Virginia Woolf intended to gift a manuscript to Vita Sackville-West. Already having ownership of the *Orlando* manuscript,

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<sup>5</sup> Helen M. Wussow, 'Introduction', in *Virginia Woolf "The Hours": The British Museum Manuscript of Mrs Dalloway* (New York: Pace University Press, 2010), p. xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Wussow, 'Introduction', p. xvi.

Sackville-West hoped to obtain the seven manuscript volumes of *The Waves*. Leonard Woolf, however, permitted her to have the notebooks relating to *Mrs Dalloway* instead. Following Sackville-West's death in 1962, 'The Hours' manuscript was bought by the British Library. Woolf presents this manuscript in three neatly bound volumes, which suggests a sense of coherence and completion, mimicking the appearance of the printed book. While in the *Jacob's Room* manuscript, she experimented with the formal aspects of printing by using crosses to demarcate spacing, in this manuscript she included a mock title page as a means of reflecting the visual aspects of the printed book. While Woolf draws her usual blue-pencilled margin on the left-hand side of the page, it is unclear why these pages are included other than to reflect the publishing method of incorporating 'vacant pages' or 'end papers' to clarify the page range of a text. In the centre of the first page of her writing, in her usual purple ink, Woolf writes the title of her novel 'The Hours?', followed by the date 'June 27<sup>th</sup> 1923'. Positioning a question mark after her title, however, suggests a level of uncertainty in the titling of her work. Despite this, the sense of completion in the appearance of the manuscript is furthered by the fact that the first volume is contained within the same red and white patterned-cloth she used to bind *Two Stories* in 1917.<sup>7</sup> Like the first volume of the *Jacob's Room* manuscript,<sup>8</sup> 'The Hours' visually mirrors the early Hogarth Press publications, as well as the book cover designs created at the Omega Workshops. On the cover of the first volume of the manuscript, ink has been shaded into the central interlinking patterns, and the Roman Numeral 'I' has been written in the same ink at the top-right hand corner of the notebook. Although at first this seems insignificant, it challenges the coherence of textual boundaries in the paratextual elements of Woolf's works.

While intertextual influences can be noted between the published edition of *Mrs Dalloway* and other examples of her writing, such as *The Voyage Out* (1915) and the short story 'A Society'

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<sup>7</sup> There were three different covers used to decorate *Two Stories*.

<sup>8</sup> This volume was bound in the covers the Woolfs used when they published Hope Mirrlees's *Paris* in 1920.

(1921),<sup>9</sup> Woolf's decision to assert the text's presence by using the covers of another raises questions about her conceptualisation of textuality as a complex network of influences.

Although, Woolf's short fiction, 'The Mark on the Wall', is not often considered an influence in the composition of *Mrs Dalloway*, its emphasis on material traces of the past in the present, as well as the fluctuation of memory, speaks directly to the multi-faceted narrative of *Mrs Dalloway*. Both texts display a similar consciousness of the effects of time, and the way in which the past and present overlap palimpsestuously.<sup>10</sup> While the narrator in 'The Mark on the Wall' attempts to visually remember the first time she saw the mark, at the opening of the novel, in the moment of June in which the narrative takes place, Mrs Dalloway visualises an October morning at her childhood home in Bourton: 'How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning [...] chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn[.]' (*MD*, p. 3). Here, Mrs Dalloway experiences both the past and the present simultaneously,<sup>11</sup> but the idea of a textual 'overlap' reiterates the visual paratexts of the manuscript and its literary predecessor, overlapping the contents of her manuscript with the bindings of another publication. If, as Gerard Genette suggests, the paratexts of a literary work signify its presence in the world, Woolf's textual practices question the assertion of the text as a solitary and static entity.<sup>12</sup> For Woolf the visual appearance of a text (in this case its bindings) also have the potential to signify textuality as a conversive interaction between various literary entities.

The disparate locations of the manuscript has led to an oversight of some of the archival material. Drafts relating to *Mrs Dalloway* reside at two different institutions: the British Library,

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<sup>9</sup> Woolf's short fiction 'A Society' has had little consideration as an intertext to *Mrs Dalloway*, but parallels can certainly be drawn between the two works. As Clarissa remembers her adolescence at Bourton, she recalls Sally Seton's politically charged intention to start 'a society': 'There they sat, hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not sent out. The ideas were Sally's, of course[.]' (*MD*, p. 30)

<sup>10</sup> This will be discussed in further detail below with regards to 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street'.

<sup>11</sup> In '[A] Sketch of the Past', Woolf describes a similar experience of the past within the present moment ('SP', pp. 80-81). This is discussed in further detail in the conclusion to the thesis.

<sup>12</sup> Gerard Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 1-2.

and the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. When Woolf was drafting *Jacob's Room* in late 1922, she bound material relating to the short stories 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' and 'The Prime Minister' in the third manuscript volume of *Jacob's Room*, which she titled 'Book of Scraps of J. R. and the first draft of The Hours'. These short fictions were later adapted by Woolf into the first two sections of the published edition of *Mrs Dalloway*.<sup>13</sup> Located at the Berg Collection rather than at the British Library, this material is often overlooked as part of the first draft of the text. The publication of Helen Wussow's transcription of the British Library manuscript has furthered this scholarly oversight, as many critics assume that this transcription includes all extant draft material relating to the text.<sup>14</sup> As a result of this, readings of Woolf's textual practice are often marred by a failure to consult this material. The text's engagement with the First World War, for example, is often considered as a marginalisation on Woolf's part. It has often been suggested that Woolf consciously excised political and social commentary from her novel. Mark Hussey, for example argues that Woolf's engagement with politics are subtle rather than overt, and that 'the connections between male supremacy and war are rarely explicit.'<sup>15</sup> Kathryn Van Wert even suggests that Woolf was indifferent to the effects of the war on the British public. In an article that uses the manuscript as a means of reading the politics of the text, Van Wert asserts that:

The drafts of "The Hours" reveal that the war did not enter the text in a substantial way until after Woolf had conceived of its central tensions. In addition to the well-known revisions she made during the novel's composition, including Septimus's commission of the suicide originally slated for Clarissa Dalloway, Woolf substitutes the Great War and its effects for what were in earlier drafts a range of complex psycholinguistic conflicts that predate the war. This suggests that to some extent, the war is an afterthought not just for the novel's characters but also for Woolf.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> There is no material relating to Woolf's process of adapting these short fictions into the opening of her novel. Woolf could have adapted these pieces when she was producing the typescript version of the text, which has subsequently been lost.

<sup>14</sup> Helen M. Wussow, *Virginia Woolf "The Hours": The British Museum Manuscript of Mrs Dalloway* (New York: Pace University Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Mark Hussey, 'Living in a War Zone: An Introduction to Virginia Woolf as a War Novelist', in *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, Myth*, ed. Mark Hussey (New York: University of Syracuse Press, 1991), pp. 1-13 (p. 10).

<sup>16</sup> Kathryn Van Wert, 'The Early Life of Septimus Smith', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 36.1 (Fall, 2012), 71-80 (74-75).

On examining the nascent versions of the novel contained within the Berg collection, however, and even the short fiction ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’, which was first published in 1923, it becomes clear that this is certainly not the case. In both versions, Woolf centralized the First World War as the backdrop and facilitator of the ‘psycholinguistic conflicts’ that are conveyed in the published novel. As she writes in ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’: ‘[P]eople suffered, how they suffered, [Clarissa] thought, thinking of Mrs Foxcroft at the Embassy last night decked with jewels, eating her heart out because that nice boy was dead.’<sup>17</sup> The opening of the British Library manuscript unambiguously exposes Woolf’s critique of the male discourses of power and war in her depiction of the ceremonial display of military processions: ‘Boys in uniform, carrying guns, marched, their eyes ahead of them, their arms stiff, their faces set upon vacancy[.]’<sup>18</sup> Here in their state of de-individualisation conveyed in their ‘uniform’, the boys’ indoctrinated complicity with the patriarchal forces of war is signified in the vacancy of their glare.

Even in her diary, Woolf expresses a concern for the political climate in which she was writing. As she notes: ‘In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life & death, sanity & insanity; I want to criticise the social system, & to show it at its most intense[.]’ (D2, p. 248). Zwerdling draws attention to the tendency to overlook this statement in scholarly engagement with the novel, writing: ‘Woolf’s provocative statement about her intentions in writing *Mrs Dalloway* has regularly been ignored. It denies the traditional view of her work as apolitical and indifferent to social issues[.]’<sup>19</sup> Due to the complexity of the various archival and metatextual materials that relate to *Mrs Dalloway*, as well as the previously published short fictions that surround and converse with the text, an awareness of this material enables us to understand that the text is not a static entity but is informed by other works intertextually. Although the

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<sup>17</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’, in *Mrs Dalloway’s Party*, ed. Stella McNichol (London: Vintage, 2010), pp. 19-28 (p. 20). All further references to the short fiction are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

<sup>18</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘The Hours’, Notebook 1, p. 6. Add. MSS. 51044. British Library.

<sup>19</sup> Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, p. 120.

published edition of the novel does not pose a direct challenge to the patriarchal institutions of government and monarchy, reading the echoes of previous textual states within the novel enables us to comprehend how Woolf uses the psychological effects of the War as the foundation for the narrative. Rather than considering the War an ‘afterthought’ in her literary design, looking beneath the surface of the published edition reveals that it very much underlines the central tensions in the various narratives that compose the text.

Woolf’s composition of *Mrs Dalloway* also furthers the idea of a fluidity in her textual boundaries. If the material contained within the *Jacob’s Room* ‘Book of Scraps’ is read alongside the opening of ‘The Hours’ manuscript it becomes clear that the latter is a continuation of the former. A fissure is present, therefore, between the British Library Archive and the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library, and due to Woolf’s unusual cataloguing process, as well as her disregard for firm textual boundaries, it is often difficult to locate the very first draft material relating to the text. Despite Charles G. Hoffman’s claim that there are ‘tantalizingly brief notes [relating to *Mrs Dalloway*] in the Berg Collection’,<sup>20</sup> a closer examination of the third manuscript volume of the *Jacob’s Room* manuscript reveals that there are extensive plans and preliminary writings that chart the development of the text. Jacqueline Latham, however, acknowledges that the material in the Berg Collection relates to the composition of the short fictions ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ and ‘The Prime Minister’, but she suggests that the tendency to overlook this material is a result of Woolf’s own failure to acknowledge the shorter fictions as part of the manuscript. Latham does stress that ‘nowhere does Virginia Woolf repudiate *Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street* [*sic.*] as the first draft of her opening of *Mrs Dalloway*, even though it was published separately as a short story in July 1923.’<sup>21</sup> A closer examination of the volume housed at the Berg collection shows that Woolf did in fact demarcate this text as ‘the first draft of ‘The Hours’, and this is signalled on the cover of ‘Book of Scraps’ relating to *Jacob’s*

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<sup>20</sup> Charles G. Hoffman, ‘From Short Story to Novel: The Manuscript Revisions of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 14.2 (1968), 171-86 (171).

<sup>21</sup> Jacqueline Latham, ‘The Origin of Mrs Dalloway’, *Notes and Queries*, CCXI, March 1966, 98-99 (p. 98).

*Room*. This is significant in that the overlapping of the two novels in terms of their cataloguing reinforces Woolf's conceptualisation of textuality as a borderless space.

This volume of the manuscript in the Berg collection, however, is in itself difficult to negotiate as the drafting of Woolf's previous novel intersects with her composition of the short fictions that would become the opening sections of *Mrs Dalloway*. There is little to distinguish one text from another, save hand-written marginalia signifying the title and date of composition. On page 131 of this manuscript draft, dated October 6<sup>th</sup> 1922, Woolf took a clean page and made note of her 'Thoughts upon beginning a book to be called, perhaps, At Home: or The Party'. On the same page, she records:

This is to be a short book consisting of six or seven chapters, each complete separately. In them must be some sort of fusion. And all must converge on the party at the end. My idea is to have some [illegible text] characters, like Mrs Dalloway, much in relief; then to have interludes of thought, or reflection, or short digressions (which must be related, logically, to the next) all compact, yet not jerked.

The chapters might be:

1. Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street
2. The Prime Minister
3. Ancestors
4. A dialogue
5. The Old ladies
6. Country house?
7. Cut flowers
8. The Party<sup>22</sup>

In a similar manner to the composition of *Monday or Tuesday* (1921) in which the works of shorter fiction were produced and published quickly, here Woolf's stated intentions to produce a series of short textual pieces is reminiscent of her earlier work at the Hogarth Press. At the time at which this plan was sketched, Mrs Dalloway was not the eponymous and central figure she would become in the published edition of the novel. She was to be presented passively 'in relief', a character who may or may not hold the text together. The uncertainty Woolf displays in centralising Mrs Dalloway's cohesive function in the plan for her novel anticipates the

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<sup>22</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*, Notebook Three, p. 131. The Henry W. and Alfred A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library.

development of Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*, who was initially presented as a marginal figure rather than a radical and experimental Post-Impressionist.<sup>23</sup> In both instances, the plans for the texts reveal how little Woolf conceptualised every aspect of her work prior to writing, suggesting that for her the process of composition was fluid and unrestrained by precise and coherent objectives.

What is particularly interesting at this point in the text's development is the reluctance Woolf demonstrates in undertaking a novel length production at the Hogarth Press, with the plan suggesting her aim to produce a series of shorter fictions rather than a lengthier textual piece. As the previous chapter of this thesis illuminates, Woolf's first novel at the Hogarth Press, *Jacob's Room*, shares many similarities to the short-story form due to the text's fragmentary structure, demarcated by line breaks, and gaps between passages, which were included on the drafted and the printed page.<sup>24</sup> Although she intended to produce 'six or seven chapters' within 'The Hours', she wanted each textual fragment to be distinct in its own right, each 'complete separately'. When the plan was drafted on October 6<sup>th</sup> 1922, Woolf had already produced the first short fiction 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', and would begin drafting 'The Prime Minister' a few days later. Her plan, therefore, demonstrates an aim to continue with the text in a similar vein as *Jacob's Room*, producing shorter pieces that would be distinct but 'logically related to the next'. While the plan is very much reflective of the published novel, with depictions of 'interludes of thought or reflection' which would all 'converge on the party at the end,' *Mrs Dalloway* is the first of Woolf's novels to contain no chapter distinctions, to be a work of continuous fluid narration. Yet the manuscript version of 'The Hours' highlights the ways in which textual material from one work spills over into another. This fluctuation between solidity and fluidity is also significant given Woolf's conceptualisation of textuality as both static and mutable, which is furthered by her focus on the short story. Despite the suggestion of cohesion

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<sup>23</sup> This is considered in detail in chapter four of the thesis.

<sup>24</sup> Perhaps Woolf's reliance on the short story form at the Hogarth Press was due to the easier methods of production and also the previous success of *Kew Gardens* (1919) and *Monday or Tuesday* (1921).



in their form, modernist short fictions, as Claire Drewery suggests, often take place in ‘in-between spaces [...] or transitorial areas’ and they ‘reveal a constant preoccupation with transcending boundaries’.<sup>25</sup> Aiming to produce a text of ‘six or seven chapters, each complete separately’, while also conveying ‘some sort of fusion’, Woolf’s plan re-enforces her idea that textuality is dialogic, speaking directly to the various textual states alongside which it borders. In her discussion of the palimpsest, Sarah Dillon describes this sort of textual interaction as a ‘contamination’: ‘a simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation [...] preserving as it does the distinctness of its texts, while at the same time allowing for their essential contamination and interdependence.’<sup>26</sup> The visceral terms in which Woolf describes her work, such as the ‘raw edges’ of her relinquished pages (*D2*, p. 289) and the ink which ‘fling[s] itself on paper like a leopard starved for blood’ (*D2*, p. 250), suggests a similar process of contamination. Both of these bloody images suggest the potential for the text to rupture, but also to leave traces or impressions upon other textual surfaces which often reiterate their interdependence.

### **Gloves, flowers, silk**

When Woolf drafted her plan on October 6<sup>th</sup> 1922, her short story ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ had already been written. A letter to T. S. Eliot, drafted in April 1922, reveals that Woolf was hoping to publish the story in the first issue of Eliot’s *The Criterion*. Offering Eliot two stories for publication, it is almost certain that one of the pieces she refers to in this letter is ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’. In the letter, Woolf articulates a lack of confidence in the short story, writing: ‘Mrs Dalloway doesn’t seem to me to be as complete as she is – but judge for yourself’ (*L3*, p. 45). Eliot judged negatively, and the text was rejected for publication in *The Criterion*. What is significant about this letter, however, is Woolf’s suggestion that Mrs Dalloway exists elsewhere outside the pages of the short story. Although she could be referring to her existence

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<sup>25</sup> Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 3.

in her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), Woolf's use of the present tense here suggests a textual existence outside the border of the short story. Mrs Dalloway as a character does not appear in this text as 'complete as she *is*' (my emphasis), which suggests that Woolf was thinking about developing another textual entity centred around this figure. 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' was accepted for publication, however, in the American Magazine *The Dial* in July 1923. A diary entry written a month before its appearance in the magazine reveals Woolf's plans to expand the text into a longer piece called 'The Hours':

But now what do I feel about my writing? – this book, that is, 'The Hours', if that's [*sic.*] its name? One must write from deep feeling, said Dostoevsky. And do I? Or do I fabricate with words, loving them as I do so? No I think not. In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life & death, sanity & insanity[.] (*D2*, p. 248)

In this diary entry, Woolf thinks about her text in terms of furnishing, building her text through the layering of fabric, which further emphasises the significance of materiality in her writing processes. Like the palimpsestuous nature of her manuscript, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' and the opening section of *Mrs Dalloway* overlap, and traces of the earlier textual state re-surface in the published edition of the novel. Optimistic in her superfluity of ideas for her novel, this diary entry also reinforces Woolf's emphasis on the relation between binary oppositions, on life and death, sanity and insanity and the instabilities between both. Given the confines of the short fiction, these tensions are not deliberated as fully as they are in the published edition of the text, but the short fiction does draw overt parallels between its other textual states.

While Stella McNichol describes the short story as an 'alternative parallel expression' to the novel, there are many reiterations that reverberate in both.<sup>27</sup> Mrs Dalloway's thoughts about the War, as well as her position within political society, provide the basis of the short fiction, which resonate with Woolf's proposal to expose the 'heart of the social system', to criticise it and to 'show it at work' (*D2*, p. 248). As the first chapter of this thesis demonstrates, Woolf often used her shorter fiction as experimental spaces, and the same can be said for 'Mrs Dalloway in

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<sup>27</sup> Stella McNichol, 'Introduction', in *Mrs Dalloway's Party* (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 10.

Bond Street'. The short story follows Mrs Dalloway as she experiences a morning in London before buying provisions for a party she is holding that evening. Perhaps one of the most famous revisions Woolf made in her career as a writer is her replacement of 'gloves' in the opening sentence of the short story for 'flowers' at the opening of *Mrs Dalloway*. While these variants are observable in both published editions, on the typescript of the short story it becomes clear that 'gloves' was a replacement for the word 'silk'. In an essay on genetic criticism, Daniel Ferrer draws attention to Woolf's correction:

The three variant words are obviously different, yet we know that are somehow equivalent. The fact that "silk," "gloves," and "flowers" are substituted for one in the same position unites them as part of the same paradigm. We can try to analyse what they have in common: all three are nouns, they refer to things one might purchase, and more specifically they may be characterised as luxury goods.<sup>28</sup>

In a somewhat reductive reading of Woolf's revision, Ferrer suggests the interchangeability of these terms poses little significance in the development of the novel. While all three could be considered luxury goods, 'things one might purchase', these items could be read in terms of their close material proximity rather than in terms of their materialist value. Although the use of "flowers" in the published edition diverges from the fabric of silk and gloves, the latter variants overlap each other in their formed and formless state. The gloves that Mrs Dalloway purchases in the short fiction are made of silk, which furthers the sense of layering in the various textual states of the novel. While Ferrer's statement suggests a sense of superficiality in these items, a closer engagement with 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' reveals that both the materiality of silk and gloves are used as a means of conveying the rupturing effects of the War. On entering the shop, Mrs Dalloway enquires: "Do you remember before the war you had gloves with pearl buttons?" ('MDB', p. 26). Woolf's narrative, however, purposely interrupts the shop assistant's answer by turning the reader's attention to the sudden movement of a woman who cannot bear the mention of the War: 'The other lady rose very sadly and took her bag, and looked at the

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<sup>28</sup> Daniel Ferrer, 'Variant and Variation: Towards a Freudo-bathmological-Bakhtino-Goodmanian Genetic Model?', in *Genetic Criticism and the Creative Process: Essays from Music, Literature and Theater*, ed. William Kinderman and Joseph E. Jones (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), pp. 35-50 (p. 36).

gloves on the counter.’ (‘MDB’, p. 26). This rupture in the text is mirrored at the end of the short fiction as another customer splits a pair of leather gloves at the seam. “Gloves have never been quite so reliable since the war,” said the shop-girl, apologising[.]’ (‘MDB’, p 28). The materiality of the gloves is inextricably linked to the War, which is often conveyed as a fissure in the linear progression of time in Woolf’s work, such as the ‘Time Passes’ section of *To the Lighthouse*.<sup>29</sup> At three instances in the short story Woolf uses gloves as a means of demarcating the destructive effects of the War in everyday life. Mrs Dalloway remembers the beauty of a pair French gloves she saw before the War and draws attention to their absence after it. The mourning woman who interrupts Mrs Dalloway’s mention of the War takes one final look at the gloves on the counter before leaving the shop. Finally, the leather gloves that split are ruptured, the text reveals, because of a chemical change in their production brought about by the War effort. In all three instances, then, Woolf uses the glove in particular as a means of conveying the rupturing effects of the War within the fabric of London society. With its connotation of protection, in its tight fit upon the contours of the hand which it shields from the adversities of the cold, the rupturing of this garment leaves the subject exposed to the resounding effects of this moment in time.

In adapting ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ for the opening sections of the published novel, Woolf’s use of the term ‘flowers’ enables her to incorporate the experiences of working-class women within her social commentary. Here Woolf chooses to expand the effects of the war on a wider scale, and she achieves this through the imagery of flowers. In the second section of *Mrs Dalloway* various working-class figures, such as Maisie Johnson and Carrie Dempster, articulate their experiences of the aftermath of the First World War. Contemplating what she has given life, Mrs Dempster thinks of flowers: ‘Roses, she thought sardonically. All trash, m’dear.

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<sup>29</sup> With no reference to a particular text, Sara Halsam writes that: ‘Virginia Woolf [showed] what the rupture of time might look like in a war novel.’ Sara Halsam, ‘The “Moaning of the World” and the “Words that Bring Me Peace”: Modernism and the First World War’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century British and American War Literature*, ed. Adam Piette and Mark Rawlinson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 47-57 (p. 48).

[...] life had been no mere matter of roses [...]. But, she implored, pity. Pity for the loss of roses. Pity she asked of Maisie Johnson, standing by the hyacinth beds' (*MD*, p. 25). While Mrs Dalloway holds cut sweet peas in her arms inside the florists, outside the shop the flowers that grow in the beds at Regent's Park become synonymous with loss and a wasted life. Woolf would later entwine the image of flowers and social commentary in *The Waves*. Occupying a space approximate to Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street, Rhoda walks through Oxford Street and scathingly offers a withered penny bunch of violets to Percival, a symbol of imperialism in the text (*TW*, pp. 126-27). Although in *Mrs Dalloway* it remains unclear whether Mrs Dempster has experienced personal loss as a result of the War, she is a device through which Woolf is able to criticise the social structures that facilitated both the War and her own downfall. Woolf's revision of a single term in her drafting of both variants of the text draws attention to the significance these slight changes have upon both the literary and political aesthetics of the published novel and short fiction, as well as our own reading practices.

The work of G. Thomas Tanselle highlights the importance of revision in the creation of meaning, which enables scholars to understand fully the development of a narrative and the way editing and redrafting strategies are inherently part of the writer's overall design for their work.<sup>30</sup> What Ferrer overlooks in Woolf's revisionary process, then, is the variety of implications that even the slightest revisions can convey. The revisions Woolf made to both her novel and short fiction fit with her drafted plan in which she aims to expose the aftermath of the First World War in the workings of British society. In contrast to Van Wert's assumption that the War did not enter the text until the final stages of its composition, looking back at the variants of the text it is evident that it is as central to the draft material as it is to the printed novel. Woolf's carefully selected terms in her revision of the opening sentence of the novel may not overtly reference the

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<sup>30</sup> Tanselle also makes a distinction between editing on a small scale (changes to words, phrases and marks of punctuation), which he calls 'horizontal' editing, and editing on a large scale (changes in structure and characterisation), which he describes as 'vertical editing'. Woolf's change here fits with the former editorial revision. G. Thomas Tanselle, 'The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention', *Studies in Bibliography*, 29 (1976), 167-211.

catastrophic effects of the War on the everyday lives of London's inhabitants. However, as this chapter demonstrates, closer attention to the way objects operate within her narrative, as artefacts that signal the material embeddedness of the War, demonstrate how its consequences underline the very textures of the text.

### **Interruptions and reiterations**

In order to trace the development of the text from a series of short fictions to a novel, the British Library manuscript requires further attention. Returning to 'The Hours', it remains unclear as to why Woolf chose to begin a new manuscript volume on June 27<sup>th</sup> 1923. However, it is evident that from this point onwards, she aimed to adapt the text into a novel rather than a collection of short stories. The material drafted in the *Jacob's Room* manuscript could have been included there according to their date of composition at the end of 1922, as well as the fact that they exist as short fictions in their own right. While the plan for 'The Hours', dated October 6<sup>th</sup> 1922, suggests that Woolf was planning to produce a book of short stories, a diary entry of November 7<sup>th</sup> 1922 reveals that she considered what she called the 'aeroplane chapter' a means of connecting the earlier short stories within the narrative as a whole:

I shall polish off my Essay article tomorrow. Wed. 8<sup>th</sup> Then I think I shall try and sketch out Mrs D. & consult L. & write the aeroplane chapter now, for I must write out of my head again. A fortnight's criticism is my stint. So if that takes a week, or 10 days, & brings me to 18<sup>th</sup> Nov. I must be ready to start the Greek chapter say on the 20<sup>th</sup>; only I have not read half or a 20<sup>th</sup> part, owing to interruptions. So I incline to write this chapter in bits. (*D2*, p. 211)

Reinforcing Woolf's frantic processes of composing multiple texts simultaneously, which was characteristic of most of her writing career, the diary entry also expresses a sense of anxiety here, and a 'fear of interruptions'. As a result, she writes her chapter 'in bits', which indicates why the volumes of her manuscript material are so obscurely catalogued. There are several occasions on which the development of the novel becomes difficult to follow. Firstly, while there are three manuscript volumes of the novel at the British Library, both the second and the third volume are

catalogued by Woolf as ‘volume 2’. On the second notebook, which is simply bound in cream paper, she writes in blue pencil ‘Mrs Dalloway 2’, while the third notebook is also titled ‘Mrs Dalloway: Vol. II’. The bindings of the third notebook are a faded emerald green, with cream diagonal stripes drawn upon the covers. Strangely, a brown triangular scrap of paper has been glued to the cover. Reminiscent of her publishing practices, Woolf leaves several pages blank following her title pages in these volumes. Commencing the narrative on page five of the first volume, Woolf writes the title ‘The Hours’ without the note of interrogation she included on her mock title page, which suggests a more direct and confident approach to adapting her shorter texts into a novel-length piece.

‘The Hours’ manuscript demarcates the continuation of her work from the *Jacob’s Room* manuscript, in which the short fictions ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ and ‘The Prime Minister’ were written. While echoes of ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ can be heard in *Mrs Dalloway*, other texts that make up the draft material of ‘The Hours’ resound in the published text. Although it is difficult to trace the composition of ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ amongst the scraps and fragments of the *Jacob’s Room* manuscript, the next fiction she intended to include in her collection was ‘The Prime Minister’, and on October 6<sup>th</sup> 1922 (the date on which the first plan for the story was also drafted) Woolf began composing the text. The short story is a key stepping-stone in the development of the novel.<sup>31</sup> As Charles G. Hoffman notes: ‘[T]he “Prime Minister” chapter begins exactly at the point where “Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street” leaves off. [...] The connection between the two “chapters” is direct and obvious, linking them together as a unified and continuous narrative.’<sup>32</sup> Although figures from the published novel, such as Edgar J. Watkins, make an appearance at this point in the narrative’s development, the textual fragment also contains the introduction of Septimus Warren Smith. The earlier short story ends with a

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<sup>31</sup> The short fiction has now been published in the second edition of Susan Dick, *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* (London and New York: Harcourt Brace, 1989), pp. 316-23.

<sup>32</sup> Hoffman, ‘From Short Story to Novel: The Manuscript Revision of *Mrs Dalloway*’, 171-72.

violent explosion and the rupturing of the leather glove, and the explosion also sounds in the opening pages of ‘The Prime Minister’:

The violent explosion, which made the women who were buying [?] gloves cower behind the counter & Mrs Dalloway, Miss Anstruther, who were buying gloves, sit very upright, came from a motor car.

It stood [still] in the middle of Bond Street; & the passers by who [?] stopped & stared, had just time to see a face of ~~the~~ very greatest importance against the dove grey ~~lining~~ of upholstery before a ~~the~~ male hand drew the blind & there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to the published edition of the novel, in which Septimus pays little attention to the occupant of the car, in this variant he is adamant that the occupant is the Prime Minister, whom he wishes to kill as well as himself: ‘I am going to die I will kill the Prime Minister & someone who has everything I want like Ellis Robertson. (he has been named for the editorship of the new daily paper). I shall be immortal, he thought, my name will be in all of the placards.’<sup>34</sup> While Mrs Dalloway experiences a connection with her surroundings and the other inhabitants of the city, Septimus aims for self-affirmation in the inscription of his name upon placards.

Shortly after drafting this fragment of text, Woolf pauses and considers ‘a possible vision of this book’. At the top of a clean page, she writes: ‘Mrs D. seeing the truth. S. S. seeing the insane truth [...] both Mrs D. and S. S. can be made luminous – [illegible word] than the stuff of the book – light on it coming from external sources.’<sup>35</sup> This note marks the first instance in which Septimus Smith and Mrs Dalloway are characterised as opposites and doubles of each other in their attempt to convey the ‘truth’ but from differing perspectives. As Wyatt Bonikowski notes: ‘Theirs is a meeting of “insane” and “sane truth” coming together in what seems the resolution to the problems of communication and separation from humanity[.]’<sup>36</sup> Although Mrs Dalloway’s attempt to communicate to the shop assistant in ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’ is

<sup>33</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room Notebook Three*, p. 133. The Henry W. and Alfred A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library.

<sup>34</sup> Woolf, *Jacob’s Room Notebook Three*, p.133.

<sup>35</sup> Woolf, *Jacob’s Room Notebook Three*, p. 153.

<sup>36</sup> Wyatt Bonikowski, *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination: The Death Drive in Post-World War I British Fiction* (London and New York: Palgrave, 2016), p. 135.



continually interrupted throughout the text, in the fragment of text that is ‘The Prime Minister’, Septimus is unable to communicate save for disjointed and incoherent utterances. In both instances ruptures in language are brought about by the effects of the War, which are linked to Woolf’s oscillation between unity and fragmentation in her writing process. In her commentary on linguistic instability in the novel, Makiko Minow-Pinkney suggests that ‘[Woolf’s] work is not a drastic demolition but a subtle and elegant infraction of syntactic laws in order to undermine the protocols of language.’<sup>37</sup> While this is certainly the case in the language that Septimus Smith uses in the novel, Woolf’s infraction of clear textual demarcations in her archival material, similarly interrogates the protocols of textual and intertextual conventions.

The reasons underlying Woolf’s decision not to include the two shorter fictions in ‘The Hours’ manuscript remains unclear. However, what is most revealing about the archive is its sporadic and dislocated arrangement. The approximate date of composition could be the reason behind Woolf’s decision to include the two short fictions in the third volume of the *Jacob’s Room* manuscript, but an inspection of ‘The Hours’ manuscript furthers Woolf’s disregard for demarcated textual boundaries. Without concluding her fictional composition, Woolf often shifts focus to begin drafting critical works that would later be published in the first volume of *The Common Reader* (1925). Like the palimpsest, which according to Dillon often consists of the ‘cohabitation of two or more alien texts’,<sup>38</sup> ‘The Hours’ is a hybrid text that transgresses and questions the borders of textuality. This practice of shifting from the composition of one narrative to another is described by Woolf as her ‘quick change theory’, and it enabled her to meet the demands of her various literary commitments. As she records in her diary:

Now I break off according to my quick change theory, to write Mrs D. (who ushers in a host of others, I begin to perceive) then I do [The Pastons and] Chaucer; & finish the first chapter early in September. By that time I shall have my Greek [‘On Not Knowing Greek’] beginning perhaps in my head; & so the future is pegged out[.] (D2, p. 189)

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<sup>37</sup> Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> Dillon, *The Palimpsest*, p. 7.

Although this diary entry was written before Woolf began collating ‘The Hours’ manuscript in June 1923, it exposes the reasoning behind her erratic and dislocated compositional process. The ‘quick change theory’ was deployed throughout the drafting of *Mrs Dalloway*, and as a result multiple tropes seep from one text into another.

One such text that echoes *Mrs Dalloway* is Woolf’s essay on Michel Montaigne, which was included in the first volume of *The Common Reader*. It was also published by the Hogarth Press, like *Mrs Dalloway*, in 1925. Montaigne’s influence on Woolf’s thinking has been asserted by Judith Allen, for example,<sup>39</sup> but a close correlation can be found between her characterisation of Septimus Warren Smith and her depiction of the Renaissance philosopher. Both in fact were written in close proximity to each other in ‘The Hours’ manuscript. In the essay, Woolf states: ‘[Montaigne’s] essays are an attempt to communicate a soul. [...] Communication is health; communication is truth; communication is happiness. To share our duty; to go down boldly and bring to light those hidden thoughts which are the most diseased[.]’<sup>40</sup> Although Woolf’s use of the term ‘diseased’ here relates to a sense of non-conformity, the idea of a free-thinking self in opposition to order closely parallels Septimus Smith’s deviation from rational thought patterns. Redeploying her own phrase in her characterisation of Septimus Smith, Woolf intertextually echoes her own writing in her depiction of Septimus’s visit to Dr Holmes at Harley Street: ‘So there was a man outside; Evans presumably; and the roses, which Rezia said were half dead, had been picked by him in the fields of Greece. Communication is health; communication is happiness. Communication, he muttered’ (*MD*, p. 84). A close inspection of the manuscript reveals that this section of her fictional work was drafted shortly before her essay on Montaigne,

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<sup>39</sup> See Allen, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* (2010), pp. 17-39. Mark Goldman also draws attention to Montaigne’s influence on Bloomsbury thought more generally: ‘Montaigne’s precepts might well be the tenets of Bloomsbury faith. He preached self-knowledge and the communication of that self. And he decries “convention and ceremony” as obstacles to inner truth.’ Mark Goldman, *The Reader’s Art: Virginia Woolf as Literary Critic* (Paris: Mouton, 1976), p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘Montaigne’, in *The Common Reader: Volume One* (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 58-68 (pp. 64-65). All further references to Woolf’s essay are to this edition and page numbers are presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

but Woolf's reiteration of the phrase in both works reinforces the fragility between the binary of 'sanity & insanity', which was part of her preliminary plan for the novel.

*Mrs Dalloway* cannot, therefore, be read in isolation from the works alongside which it was drafted. It was also while Woolf was composing her essay on 'Montaigne' that she characterised her writing process in terms of 'relinquished pages' scattered multitudinously. As we have seen, she also characterised her manuscript in bloody and visceral terms, as a wound from which the language of one narrative has the potential to seep into the next. As Wussow notes:

'The Hours' is more than an incident on the road towards *Mrs Dalloway's* eventual publication. It is part of the multiple text that is Woolf's novel. 'The Hours' relate intertextually with many versions of the many texts of itself. The result of the dynamic interrelation is yet another work, another version of what we call *Mrs Dalloway*. The version is not 'final,' but is created from constant dialogue as it speaks to and out of its associate texts. [...] The lack of closure, the open-endedness of the ever-constructing work reveals the fluctuating textual boundaries of *Mrs Dalloway*, a situation that defies delineation in this age of definitive editions.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, Stella McNichol draws attention to the fact that several short fictions, which have more recently been published in *Mrs Dalloway's Party*, were written after the completion of the novel. She was even, as McNichol points out, drafting these fictions shortly before beginning *To the Lighthouse* in 1926.<sup>42</sup> Woolf's preoccupation with the novel as a source for alternative texts that overlap and converse with *Mrs Dalloway* speaks directly to her conceptualisation of textuality as fluid and subject to renewal and change. While Mrs Dalloway's presence within these distinct textual entities conveys a sense of coherence, Woolf's alternative texts enable her to emphasise the subjective nature of experience. Stories such as 'The New Dress' and 'A Summing Up', both of which were written after the publication of *Mrs Dalloway*, undermine the fixity of the event in the novel by presenting alternate perspectives, not unlike the 'cubist' effect she achieved in *Jacob's Room*. Echoes of Mrs Dalloway's party can also be found in the third section of *The Waves*, in

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<sup>41</sup> Wussow, 'Introduction' in *The Hours: The Original Holograph Draft*, p. ix.

<sup>42</sup> McNichol, 'Introduction', in *Mrs Dalloway's Party*, p. 10.

which Rhoda and Jinny offer divergent experiences of a single party. If the text is read as a palimpsest, then its textual overlapping is not confined solely to the narratives that surround and extend *Mrs Dalloway*, but filters into other textual entities in Woolf's *oeuvre*. They share, as Dillon notes, an 'intimacy and separation' across distinct textual demarcations.<sup>43</sup> Her textual border-crossing also fits with her overall modernist project to offer counter-narratives to those that are considered static and definitive.

Woolf further achieves this effect in the novel by foregrounding both the substantiality and insubstantiality of written language. There are many instances in which the act of inscription occur in *Mrs Dalloway*. Septimus Smith, for example, displays an interest in writing down his thoughts on fragments of paper: 'Men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He noted such revelations on the back of envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (he wrote it down).' (*MD*, p. 22). While Septimus's practice of writing on fragments reflect the raw and relinquished pages of Woolf's own fragmentary archive, Lucrezia's own language at this point in the narrative lacks a sense of cohesion and permanence: '“For you should have seen the Milan gardens,” she said aloud. But to whom? There was nobody. Her words faded. So a rocket fades' (*MD*, p. 16). Lucrezia's articulation of isolation dissipates into non-existence as she is also unable to communicate.<sup>44</sup> Septimus's fragmentary writings and Lucrezia unsubstantial utterances point towards Woolf's conceptualisation of the instability of the text. It is, however, the trail of writing left by the aeroplane that is perhaps the most memorable act of inscription in the novel. Although the car that passes through Bond Street acts as a means of linking Mrs Dalloway, Septimus and Lucrezia, the aeroplane draws together disparate perspectives to a single point. Attempting to discern the words made from its trail, the

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<sup>43</sup> Dillon, *The Palimpsest*, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> A reverberation of Rezia's phrase 'But to whom?' is present in *The Waves*, and it is bound to the act of reading. In childhood Rhoda reads Shelley's poem 'The Question' and imagines the act of giving flowers a means of communicating the self: '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?' (*TW*, p. 44).

occupants of Bond Street are transfixed by the inscription: ‘But what letters? A C was it? An E, then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; they then moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky[.]’ (*MD*, p. 18). Melting and dispersing into the atmosphere the message is neither static or clear. The struggle to interpret its message also enables Woolf to foreground the process of reading as a complex and subjective act. As Allen notes: ‘This complex interaction somehow produces “meaning” – for that reader, at that moment and in that particular place. It may be transformative, [...] or stimulate any number of mysterious responses.’<sup>45</sup> The ‘practices of reading and writing’, as Randall argues, are inherently part of the experience of everyday life.<sup>46</sup> Although this moment of collective reading and interpretation establishes a sense of unity between the occupants of Bond Street, the aeroplane itself in its ability to cross spatial demarcations aerially undermines this moment of cohesion. In ‘The Island and the Aeroplane: The Case of Virginia Woolf’, Gillian Beer considers the aeroplanes that appear in her works, from *Mrs Dalloway* to *Between the Acts* (1941), and reads them as a symbol of Woolf’s rejection of borders and restrictions. Beer also aligns the image of the aeroplane with Woolf’s theories of textuality:

The patchwork continuity of an earth seen in this style undermines the concept of [British] nationhood which relies on the cultural idea of an island – and undermines, too, the notion of the book as an island. Narratives no longer held within the determining contours of land-space.<sup>47</sup>

Beer’s suggestion that the aeroplane signifies the disruption and disintegration of boundaries is a useful model for thinking about Woolf’s theorisation of language and textuality at this point in *Mrs Dalloway*. If the aeroplane undermines the notion of the book as a static and fixed entity, then its trail of dissolving letters, fluctuating between visibility and dispersal, also signifies the complex task of reading, which for each individual can offer an infinite array of meanings. The fading of the lettering here, in which traces of the inscription can be observed momentarily,

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<sup>45</sup> Allen, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language*, p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*, p. 158.

<sup>47</sup> Gillian Beer, ‘The Island and the Aeroplane: The Case of Virginia Woolf’, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Nhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 265-90 (p. 266).

speaks directly to the idea of the palimpsest as a conveyor of temporary inscriptions which become obscured (but still visible beneath) other forms of writings. But the idea of the palimpsest also enables us to think about ways of reading *Mrs Dalloway*; digging beneath the surface of its printed incarnation reveals layers of meaning that can shape our engagement the text.

An examination of Woolf's textual practices also sheds light on the palimpsestuous nature of time in the novel. Just as the variants of 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' echo in the published edition of the novel, throughout the narrative the past continually overlaps with the present. Like the inscriptions that trail from the aeroplane, time is also presented as both tangible and insubstantial: the 'leaden circles' of Big Ben's chime 'dissolved in the air' (*MD*, p. 4). As Randall suggests, time in *Mrs Dalloway* is both universal and particular:

The sounding of the hour exactly repeats such soundings in previous days, making it cyclical as well as linear, the same as well as different, but also it affords the narrator the opportunity to express the many and various psychic temporalities at play in the everyday life of the individual, the tolling of the hours marking these Londoners' shared experience of time.<sup>48</sup>

While the reading of the aeroplane advertisement brings together the disparate subjectivities of the inhabitants of London, the chiming of the hours similarly signifies collective time.<sup>49</sup> Mrs Dalloway's experience of 'this moment of June' (*MD*, p. 4) similarly reinforces this oscillation between the two states of time. While the opening sentence of the novel establishes the temporality of the narrative present, the sound of the 'squeak of hinges, which [Mrs Dalloway] could hear now' return her to her past experiences at her childhood home at Bourton. Like Woolf, who in '[A] Sketch of the Past' articulates an ability to see the past within the present, Mrs Dalloway's experience of time is non-linear, but for her the creation of memory is a creative process not unlike writing.

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<sup>48</sup> Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*, p. 160.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Ricoeur describes the distinction between time in the mind and universal or monumental time. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf enacts the overlapping of both. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 2, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-1988), p. 108.

For Woolf, memory and writing cannot exist in isolation from each other. Memory provides the basis for Woolf's conceptualisation of the literary 'sensation' and her impulses for writing. In '[A] Sketch of the Past', she conveys a palimpsestuous theorisation of the past, in which the past overlaps and can be experienced in the present:

Those moments – in the nursery, on the road to the beach – can still be more real than the present moment. This I have just tested. For I got up and crossed the garden. Percy was digging in the asparagus bed; Louie was shaking a mat in front of the bedroom door. But I was seeing them through the sight I saw here – the nursery and the road to the beach. [...] I see it – the past – as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions. ('SP', pp. 80-81)

Claiming that she can visually see the everyday scenes of her home at Monk's House while simultaneously experiencing the 'emotions' of the past, Woolf suggests that for her those past moments are 'more real' than the present. In her discussion of *Mrs Dalloway*, Randall draws attention to the 'centrality of memory in the construction of the subject', and how in this text Woolf 'magnif[ies] these processes, reveals to us the process of remembering and memorialisation through which human subjects operate every day.'<sup>50</sup> In Woolf's visualisation the 'nursery and the road to the beach' in her memoir, she makes material her memory of the past in the image of a 'ribbon of scenes', 'an avenue' lying behind her. But for her the past is also auditory, and she suggests an ability to tune in to it as one would tune into a radio: 'I shall fit a plug into the wall; and listen to the past. I shall turn up August 1890' ('SP', p. 81). Although this memory is personal to Woolf, it is not unlike Mrs Dalloway's experience of this particular June moment. As the 'soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air' surrounds her, she similarly experiences temporality as something that can be manipulated: 'one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it afresh[.]' (*MD*, p. 4). This active participation in the experience of time also fits with Woolf's conceptualisation of textuality as an exchange between author and reader. What this suggests is a direct correlation between Woolf's writing practices and the thematic concerns of the novel. As this chapter shows, reading her manuscript as a composite

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<sup>50</sup> Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*, p. 162.

palimpsest, with fluid textual and intertextual boundaries, provides a new understanding of Woolf's published novel as a text in which echoes of past textual states reverberate throughout.

In reading *Mrs Dalloway* palimpsestuously, we can trace how the early textual states condition the published version of the novel. But, rather than reading this edition as an authoritative and unchanging entity, looking beneath the surfaces of its printed textual state reveals alternative iterations of the same narrative, which have the potential to offer alternative ways of reading *Mrs Dalloway*. The surfaces of textuality offer an insight into the processes that condition its composition. As Woolf's multiple revisions of the opening sentence of the text show, narratives can overtly and inadvertently echo their former states. In the case of *Mrs Dalloway*, tracing previous versions of the text enhance our reading of the main concerns of the novel, such as the effects of the First World War upon the everyday lives of people that jostle within its textual spaces. It also helps us read the way Woolf's engagement with the War developed and transformed in her adaptation of the text from a work of short fiction to a published novel, and her movement towards a more inclusive depiction of the effects of this rupturing event. A minor revision of a single term (silk, gloves, flowers) in three differing versions offers new ways of reading this aspect of the text, as it shows her incorporation of differing voices and perspectives that were absent in the text's initial incarnation, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street'. As Dillon notes, 'the geno-text', or the embedded versions of a text (manuscripts, typescripts, drafts), 'rupture that [elected] pheno-text with its insistent reminder of the infinite possibilities of palimpsestuous textuality.'<sup>51</sup> Given the complexity of the textual states of *Mrs Dalloway*, the many works that 'surround and extend it' as McNichol notes,<sup>52</sup> the text encourages varied and various readings of the novel, and these have the potential to disrupt the established, published edition of the novel. Woolf's literary materiality, the visual signifiers of her manuscript material, also challenge the seemingly fixed nature of textuality. The fact that she

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<sup>51</sup> Dillon, *The Palimpsest*, p. 88.

<sup>52</sup> McNichol, 'Introduction', in *Mrs Dalloway's Party*, p. 10.



refrains from signifying a point of origin for the novel, as well as her (infamous) practice of creating different typescripts with different editorial changes for British and American editions of the text, all demonstrate her disregard for static and unalterable textual borders. In the published novel Woolf's focus on the instability of inscriptions, the dissipating advertisement written by the aeroplane for example, also destabilises the notion of a single, authoritative version of the novel. Thinking about *Mrs Dalloway* as a complex and mutable artefact, a palimpsest underlined by its previous textual iterations, allows us to read the novel as an expansive work that challenges the notion of clear textual and intertextual borders. It is an artefact with 'cold raw edge[s],' the contents of which threaten to seep through their material confines.

## Chapter IV:

### ‘A Painter on Paper’: The Visual Aesthetics of *To the Lighthouse*

I am more incapable than anyone else in the world of making an aesthetic judgement on [*To the Lighthouse*] – only I know that I have somewhere a feeling about it as a work of art which will perhaps gradually take shape and which must be enormously stirring to make an impression on me at all beside the other feelings which you rouse in me. [...] I daresay you’ll think all I’ve said nonsense. You can put it down to the imbecile ravings of a painter on paper. By the way, surely Lily Briscoe must have been rather a good painter – before her time perhaps, but with great gifts really? No we didn’t laugh at the bits about painting – though I’m a little doubtful about covering paints with damp cloths[.]

Vanessa Bell, Letter to Virginia Woolf, dated May 11<sup>th</sup> 1927.<sup>1</sup>

Vanessa Bell’s reading of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) confirmed for Virginia Woolf the success of her initial vision and design. Although dismissive of her written commentary, describing it as ‘the imbecile ravings of a painter on paper’, Bell’s response provides a valuable insight into her own thinking about the relationship between literature and visual art. Here Bell makes note of the formal design of the novel, which continues to take shape for her the more she thinks about it: ‘There is more to catch hold of,’ she writes, ‘I am excited and thrilled and taken into another world as one only is by a great work of art’ (*VBL*, p. 317). Bell’s discussion of the structural aspects of her sister’s work reflects Woolf’s famous plan for her novel: the H-shaped design of two larger blocks of text joined by a smaller ‘corridor’ of abstract writing.<sup>2</sup> But it also draws a parallel with a lesser known idea of Woolf’s about the formal structure of the sentence. In a diary entry drafted during the early stages of her writing, Woolf notes:

As I am not going to milk my brains for a week, I shall here write the first pages of the greatest book in the world. This is what the book would be that was made entirely solely & with integrity of one’s thoughts [*viz.*]. Suppose one could catch them before they could become “works of art”? Catch them hot & sudden as they rise in the mind – walking up Asheham hill for instance. Of course one cannot; for the process of language is slow & deluding. One must stop to find a word; then there is the form of the sentence, soliciting one to fill it in. (*D3*, p. 102)

<sup>1</sup> Vanessa Bell, *Selected Letters*, pp. 317-18.

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘Notes for Writing’. MS. 11. The Alfred A. and Henry W. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library.

Thinking that the ‘greatest book in the world’ would convey the unadulterated ‘integrity’ of a writer’s thoughts, Woolf aims to catch hold of her impulses before they become articulated ‘works of art’ on paper. Although lamenting the inability of words to accurately convey meaning, Woolf implies that the formal structure of the sentence precedes the act of writing: the sentence is there to be filled with the author’s words. Like the painter, who uses colour to build form and structure, Woolf suggests that the writer must carefully select the right words in order to convey literary meaning. For her, the writer is the subject through which the creative impulse, or in Bloomsbury terms, the ‘aesthetic emotion’, must be translated into language.

Woolf’s philosophy is on the surface reflective of Clive Bell’s idea of ‘significant form’. However, in drawing attention to the structural form of her writing in this diary entry, Woolf modifies Clive Bell’s theory by suggesting that the sentence itself can also be included in debates about visual structure and form.<sup>3</sup> Bell’s work proposes that all objects, from a coal-scuttle to a Grecian urn, can inspire ‘aesthetic emotion’: ‘There is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings textiles, etc.[.]’<sup>4</sup> Bell’s reference to the ‘coal-scuttle’ here is significant given Woolf’s frequent inclusion of the artefact in her own writing. Often, she presents the object as subject to the effects of time and decay. In ‘The Mark on the Wall’ for example, the narrator notes how little control she has over her material possessions: ‘let me just count over a few things lost in our lifetime [...] the bird cages, the iron hoops, the steel skates, the Queen Anne coal-scuttle’ (‘MW’, p. 4). In *Orlando*, the coal-scuttle appears again amidst the decaying damp of the nineteenth century: ‘Damp swells the wood, furs the kettle, rusts the iron, rots the stone. So gradual is the process, that it is not until we pick up some chest of drawers, or coal scuttle [*sic*.], and the whole thing drops to pieces in our hands, that we suspect that the disease is at work’ (O, p. 157). Woolf’s repeated inclusion of the artefact in her work suggests the

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<sup>3</sup> Bell, *Art*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Bell, *ibid.*, p. 14.

centrality of Clive Bell's theory in her own engagement with material objects. However, while Bell solidifies the coal-scuttle's significant form in his essay, Woolf challenges this by foregrounding its potential to deteriorate. Woolf's disrupts Bell's assertion that visual form is the sole conveyor of 'pure art', firstly by drawing attention to the palpability of the sentence in her diary, and also through her manipulation of solid objects in her writing.

Much has been said about Bloomsbury's disregard for the 'illustrative' and 'literary' aspects of painting. Simon Watney, for example, notes that Roger Fry's definition of Post-Impressionism 'arbitrarily grouped [artists] together as examples of an anti-naturalistic tendency, which Fry hoped, would successfully challenge the dominance of what he described as "literary" painting, or "pseudo art".<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Clive Bell's controversial statement that "[l]iterature is never pure art' characterises literature as unrelated to the formalist concerns of twentieth-century visual aesthetics. Although there was much resistance, in Clive Bell's case, for any parallels to be drawn between art and literature, some scholarship does acknowledge the similarities between Woolf's writing and Bloomsbury formalism. Christopher Reed provides a re-examination of the relationship between her work and the concept of 'significant form'. His definition of 'Bloomsbury formalism' shares many similarities with Woolf's conceptualisation of her writing process:

Bloomsbury formalism may often be found wavering between claiming, on the one hand, that artists *find* "significant form" – be it visual or psychological volume – in the real world and instinctively record it, and, on the other hand, that significant form is *made* by artists, becoming a testament to talent and embodiment of individual personality. (emphasis in original)<sup>6</sup>

He also suggests that *To the Lighthouse* is Woolf's most successful engagement with Post-Impressionism due to Lily Briscoe's fictional manipulation of spatial form: 'Lily does not simply replace one subject with another. She simplifies, abstracts and adjusts her image until it attains

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<sup>5</sup> Simon Watney, *English Post-Impressionism* (London: Studio Vista, 1980), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Reed, 'Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 38.1 (Spring, 1992), 20-43 (30).

[...] independence from its model.<sup>7</sup> If we return to Woolf's undated diary entry of 1926, several similarities can be noted between Woolf's depiction of Lily's painting process and her own impulses for writing. Firstly, Woolf acknowledges that her impulses occur from an engagement with the material world. Secondly, she notes that the writer must act as a translator of sorts, creating 'significant form' from their thoughts as they rise 'hot & sudden[...] in the mind' (*D3*, 102). Woolf's understanding of her own writing processes, then, forms the basis of her depiction of Lily Briscoe's transformation of subject and object into architectural form, and both the writer and her fictional artist shape their creative vision into formal structures: that of the written sentence and geometric form.

The idea that the sentence is a formal structure that requires filling with words also sheds light on the writing and editorial strategies Woolf deployed in her manuscript material. An engagement with the manuscript reveals two striking aspects of the composition of *To the Lighthouse*: the first is Woolf's minimal use of language in her draft material, and the second is her modification of Lily Briscoe. Initially, it was not Woolf's intention to include an artist in her novel, and Lily's name does not appear on the list of potential characters she drafts on the third page of her manuscript. Her appearance in the manuscript, as this chapter will suggest, marks a shift in the text's engagement with the visual arts, and after Lily's introduction, Woolf's conscious effort to incorporate more colour into her work is clearly evident. Like a painter, who composes by layering colour upon colour until the desired effect is achieved, Woolf similarly layers colour into the writing of her novel in the revisionary stages. Throughout her career, as Goldman demonstrates, Woolf often used 'painterly analogies for writing. [...] this metaphor extends to Woolf's description of the physical act of writing itself: like painting, writing is a process of marking – to write is to paint with words, to create colour.'<sup>8</sup> While the first chapter of this thesis considered how Woolf plays with the representational uses colour in her short

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<sup>7</sup> Reed, 'Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics', 30.

<sup>8</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, pp. 114-15.

fictions, this chapter aims to think about the ways she considers her revisionary processes in colourful and ‘painterly terms’. On two distinct occasions, Woolf draws a parallel between editing and painting. While revising *Mrs Dalloway* in December 1924, she wrote in her diary: ‘I believe [...] one works with a wet brush over the whole, & joins parts separately composed and gone dry’ (D2, 323). Similarly, while preparing the typescript of *The Waves* in May 1931, she notes: ‘I can see no other way to make all the corrections & keep the lilt, & join up, & expand & do all the other final processes. It is like sweeping over an entire canvas with a wet brush’ (D4, 25). Although Woolf uses her analogy of painting to demonstrate how she creates unity by blending disparate passages of text, in the manuscript of *To the Lighthouse* it is clear that her revisionary paintbrush distributed colour rather than water onto the pages of her work. Through a close examination of the revisions made to Lily Briscoe in the manuscript, this chapter will suggest that Woolf builds her text through the revisionary addition of colour, and it will also argue that the process of creating ‘a painter on paper’ is central to Woolf’s broader conversation with the colourism of Post-Impressionism.

### **White page and purple ink**

Woolf was conscious that her editorial strategies for *To the Lighthouse* were considerably different from those she used for *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). When drafting her previous novel, Woolf wrote expansively at first and checked the fluidity of her writing during the revisionary stages. In the manuscript of *To the Lighthouse*, however, Woolf describes her intention to write minimally at first and to expand the text when she came to produce the typescript. Like the diary entry in which she acknowledges that the form of the sentence must be filled with words, here Woolf applies the same approach to editing *To the Lighthouse*; she plans to sketch out the structure of her text before adding the finer details of her narrative at the revisionary stages. She makes her intention clear in a plan drafted in August 1925: ‘My aim [is] to find a unit ~~wh~~ for the sentence which shall be less emphatic & intense than that in Mrs. D: an everyday sentence for carrying on the

narrative easily.<sup>9</sup> Aspiring for simplicity rather than complexity, Woolf's early plan seems not to correspond with the intensity of her language in the published edition of *To the Lighthouse*. Shortly after she began drafting 'The Window', Woolf wrote the following marginal comment at the bottom of the third page of her manuscript: 'I observe today that I am writing exactly oppositely from my other books: very loosely at first; not tight at first; & shall have to tighten finally, instead of loosening as always before' (MSS 3).<sup>10</sup>

As a result of this approach, the manuscript version of *To the Lighthouse* reads very much like a sketch of the printed edition. The typescript of the novel, however, has never been found or it has been destroyed, and because of this it has been difficult for scholars to fully examine Woolf's editorial process. After 'improvising' her novel on the typewriter in the afternoons, Woolf would return to her typescript to make various adjustments before sending her work to her printers R.&R. Clark in Edinburgh. Famously, Woolf produced two typescripts for each of her works: one for the Hogarth Press, and one for her American publishers, Harcourt Brace and Company. She thought it unnecessary to ensure that the editorial emendations were consistent for both British and American editions, and, as such, significant variations are apparent between them. With neither the British or American typescript available, the only *avant-texte* relating to *To the Lighthouse* is a French translation of "Time Passes" by Charles Mauron, which was printed in *Commerce* in the winter of 1926. This variant was translated directly from a typescript Woolf sent to Mauron in October 1926 and conveys some minor differences between the typescript and the manuscript. While the differing variations expose Woolf's disregard for clear textual boundaries,

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<sup>9</sup> Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Holograph Notebook 1, MSS 3. The Alfred A. and Henry W. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library; Susan Dick (ed.), *To the Lighthouse: The Original Holograph Draft* (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 2. All further references to the manuscript will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis. I will make reference to Susan Dick's methods of pagination due to the inaccuracy in Woolf's own recordings. I have also included Woolf's cancellations as they appear in the transcription.

<sup>10</sup> Woolf notes the date that she wrote this comment as March 9<sup>th</sup> 1926. It was added after she had begun work on the novel, as the rest of the page is dated January 15<sup>th</sup> 1926.

they also raise various problems for scholars aiming to examine the whole range of her compositional processes.

However, a close consideration of the draft material does yield clues about Woolf's nascent revisionary practices. For example, she wrote the three volumes of her manuscript predominantly in Waterman violet ink, but used a black pen or pencil to add interlinear emendations and marginal comments, which suggests that these were added to the manuscript at a later date.<sup>11</sup> Woolf's use of purple ink also emphasises the significance of colour in her writing processes, and it draws a link between the material conditions of her work and her literary experimentalism. In the context of the production of *To the Lighthouse*, the drafting of her manuscript in this colour is significant when considering Woolf's wider feminist project of situating female creativity at the centre of artistic production. The colour purple is a central component of Woolf's visual aesthetic in *To the Lighthouse*, but it also, as Goldman argues, highlights her identification with suffrage and suffragette artwork and aesthetics. Goldman maintains that Woolf's 'feminist prismatic', her representational use of the suffrage colours, green, white and purple, demonstrate her commitment to the political discourses of the early twentieth century: 'The colours were linked with the militant Women's Social and Political Union in particular and "the cause" in general. By no means the only colours of feminism, they were by far the most famous.'<sup>12</sup> In the development of *To the Lighthouse*, the suffrage colours of purple, white and green underline the colour spectrum of the novel, but Woolf's decision to compose in purple ink can also be read as central to her feminist vision. While the contrast between black ink impressed or inscribed upon a white page was fundamental to Woolf's aesthetic as a hand-printer at the Hogarth Press, and a visual marker of the woodcuts designed by Dora Carrington and Vanessa Bell to accompany her short fictions, her decision to move away from a monochromatic colouration in her draft material suggests that her engagement with colour

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<sup>11</sup> For more on this see Susan Dick, 'Introduction', in *To the Lighthouse: The Original Holograph Draft*, transcribed and ed. Susan Dick (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 11-35 (p. 13).

<sup>12</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, pp. 68-9.



stretches further than the content of her literary works. For Goldman, black and white, or light and shade, are associated with the ‘patriarchal chiaroscuro,’ which Lily’s vision of ‘bright violet’ and ‘staring white’ seek to challenge.<sup>13</sup> What this reveals is Lily’s modification of ‘darkness’, of the absence of colour, into a shade of purple, and this reinforces her feminist assertion of her own aesthetic vision in ‘male dominated environs.’<sup>14</sup> Woolf similarly modifies the conventional black and white of the written word for the suffrage colours of purple and white. While this furthers Woolf’s identification with suffrage aesthetics, it also exposes a parallel between the material conditions of Woolf’s textual productions and her representational and political use of colour in literary form. In terms of representation, the colour spectrum of the novel also changes over the course of the manuscript; modifying the pastel-pinks and lemon-yellows of Lily Briscoe’s initial attempt at painting in the manuscript to the stark whites and purples with which she paints in the published novel, we can witness Woolf’s movement towards a more assertive feminist vision conveyed by her fictional Post-Impressionist.

### **Modelling space with greens and blues**

While Lily Briscoe is often considered Woolf’s most successful feminist figure, little, if any, critical attention has been given to the fact that she was initially drawn in much more conservative terms. For example, Woolf’s early drafting of the completion of Lily’s painting at the end of the novel lacks the poised self-assertion the painter displays in the published text: ‘{It was only a sketch} It was one of those pictures that would be hung in bedrooms, & then the attics; {or} it would be destroyed. [...] She took up her brush. She looked at her sketch [...] & saw, as she had known she would see, precisely what was needed.’ (MSS 366). A closer inspection of the manuscript reveals Woolf’s frustration with this passage as an ending to her novel; in thick black ink, a diagonal line cancels this section from the narrative. Shortly after,

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<sup>13</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> Goldman considers the garden in which Lily paints to be a male-dominated space in the first part of the novel. Goldman, *ibid.*, p. 172.

Woolf re-drafts the passage so that it more closely anticipates the end of the published edition: '[Lily] looked at the step. She drew a line, there, in the centre {of the canvas}. She had solved her problem. {The white shape stayed perfectly still} [...] There! ~~It was done~~. It was over. But she had had her vision.' (MSS 366). This revision reveals Woolf's continual modification of Lily's character throughout the manuscript draft, even at the final stages of writing. While in the first passage, Lily remains pessimistic about the future of her painting, in the second more emphasis is placed on the process of creation rather than the finished work of art. Although Woolf refrains from describing the content of Lily's painting and what it represents, her emphasis on the process of production speaks directly to her own writing practices. As the third chapter of this thesis demonstrates, Woolf challenged the fixity of textual boundaries in her writing processes, and rarely considered her own established works to be static and unchangeable.

Even at the early stages of writing, Woolf did not plan her work with precision. As Susan Dick notes, 'Virginia Woolf had by no means worked out every aspect of [*To the Lighthouse*] before she began to write it.'<sup>15</sup> Of the two plans she drew on the third page of her first writing notebook, neither detail art or painting as a central aspect of the narrative. Yet in the plan, drafted on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1925, Woolf exposes the centrality of structural form to the design of the text:

The plan of this book is roughly that it shall consist of three parts: one, Mrs Ramsay sitting at the window: while Mr Ramsay walks up & down in the dusk: the idea being that there shall be curves of conversation or reflection or description or in fact anything modulated by his appearance & disappearance at the window. [...] Several characters can be brought in: the young atheist, the old gentleman: the lovers: Episodes can be written on woman's beauty; on truth: but these should be greater & less knobbly then [*sic*.] those in Mrs. D: making a more harmonious whole. (MSS 2)

The idea that 'curves of conversation' should characterise the novel reinforces the idea that for Woolf the distinction between the written sentence and painterly expression was not as great as Roger Fry and Clive Bell proposed. For Goldman, Woolf's famous H-shaped design for the

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Dick, 'Introduction', in *To the Lighthouse: The Original Holograph Draft*, p. 13.

novel further challenges the distinction between literature and visual form. The design is also indelibly connected with the structures of language:

Bloomsbury aesthetic formalism [...] may explain Woolf's initial conception of the novel, not in words but in as a simple abstract shape, capable of further avant-garde transformations. Yet that same shape [...] may be read as itself firstly a letter of the alphabet, even a word. Woolf's drawing resembles the letter "I" on its side, perhaps, or a slightly elongated letter "H". Read as a letter of the alphabet, it speaks to the alphabetical mind of the philosopher Mr. Ramsay; but it may also be decoded as a feminist toppling of the signifier of patriarchal subjectivity, rendering in landscape rather than portrait form the letter "I" that overshadows the reader Phoebe in *A Room of One's Own*.<sup>16</sup>

The parallel Goldman draws between the structures of language and artistic form also suggests a commonality between the two forms of creative expression. Although Lily Briscoe's visionary Post-Impressionism is not apparent at the opening of the manuscript draft, Woolf's foregrounding of the formal structure of her novel reveals the significance chiaroscuro plays in the initial conception of the work. In the published version of the novel, light and darkness play a prominent role. The novel follows the passing of a single day, with the evening of 'The Window' leading to the 'downpouring of immense darkness' in 'Time Passes,' and, finally the re-emergence of light and vision at the end of the text (*TL*, p. 137). The H-shaped structure of the novel, as Hans Walter Gabler suggests, enables Woolf to convey the course of one night: 'It connects the evening of the day of "The Window" with the morning breaking on the day of "The Lighthouse." It thus fills a stretch in time of just one night, but it does so intermittently and with sparse symbolic detail.'<sup>17</sup> Woolf's use of light is also linked with her use of colour; as Goldman highlights: ['"Time Passes"'] is a kind of eclipse since it marks the occlusion of one way of life, or one sense of subjectivity, and leads to the emergence of another.<sup>18</sup> Although Woolf had not considered the inclusion of a woman artist in her initial plan, her nascent imagery of

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<sup>16</sup> Jane Goldman, 'To the Lighthouse's Use of Language and Form', in *The Cambridge Companion to To the Lighthouse*, ed. Allison Pease (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 30-46 (p. 33).

<sup>17</sup> Hans Walter Gabler, 'From Memory to Fiction: An Essay in Genetic Criticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to To the Lighthouse*, ed. Allison Pease (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 146-157 (p. 147).

<sup>18</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 169.

darkness and the emergence of new light anticipates the passing of the ‘old order of things’ and the assertion of Lily Briscoe’s new and experimental visual aesthetic.

Placing the formal design of the novel in the context of Woolf’s feminism sheds further light on Lily Briscoe’s assertion of creative independence in the innovative formalism of her painting:

Can’t paint, can’t write, she murmured monotonously, anxiously considering what her plan of attack should be. [...] her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues (*TL*, pp. 173-74).

What is also significant here is the fact that language, ‘names’ and ‘sayings’, are centralised by Woolf as part of Lily’s creative process. Reducing the torrent of her thoughts to simply coloured forms of ‘greens and blues’, Lily Briscoe is able to combat the doubt generated by Tansley’s aggravating phrase. Yet the colours blue and green are also significant if considered in the light of Woolf’s own literary experimentation with colour in her early short stories. The short fictions ‘BLUE. & GREEN.’, which were published in *Monday or Tuesday* in 1921, are Woolf’s attempt to represent the ‘sensations of colour’ in language.<sup>19</sup> Conversing directly with G. E. Moore’s ‘The Refutation of Idealism’ (1903), Woolf seeks to reveal the extent to which the experience and effects of colour can be conveyed in literature. Central to Moore’s philosophy is the idea that colour can exist independently of material objects. He interrogates whether or not colour can be experienced without visual perception:

[S]ometimes the sensation of blue exists in my mind and sometimes it does not; and knowing, as we now do, that the sensation of blue includes two different elements, namely consciousness and blue, the question arises whether, when the sensation of blue exists, it is the consciousness which exists, or the blue which exists, or both.<sup>20</sup>

For Moore, and also for Woolf, consciousness is central to the experience of colour. If ‘the sensation of blue’ can exist in the mind with or without the perception of it, then can the effects

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<sup>19</sup> In presenting the title of Woolf’s short fictions, I have retained the typographical manner in which they are presented in *Monday or Tuesday* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1921).

<sup>20</sup> G. E. Moore, ‘The Refutation of Idealism’, *Mind*, 12.48 (October, 1903), 433-453 (444).

of blue be produced in writing? Sim argues that Woolf's philosophy of colour furthers Moore's ideas by foregrounding the subjective experience of colour in her work: 'Woolf challenges assumptions that there is a universal way of perceiving quotidian objects [...]. She is also interested in the nature of colour and how different people experience colour.'<sup>21</sup> Woolf's 'BLUE. & GREEN.' demonstrates the translation of colour sensation into language, and places an emphasis on the multiplicity of subjective experience.<sup>22</sup> In the short fiction, colour is not represented as fixed and unchanging, and Woolf tests the capacity of the terms 'blue' and 'green' to encapsulate the effects of the visual colour. Her method of printing the title of her fictions, as Sim also suggests, highlights her intention to question the linguistic representation of colour: '[T]he titles of each sketch, 'BLUE.' And 'GREEN.', which are followed by a full stop, indicate the limited expressive capacity of these names. [...] the paragraphs are almost square and are positioned in the centre of two pages opposite one another. Thus, both in terms of their spatialization and content, they resemble paintings hanging in a gallery.'<sup>23</sup> The simplicity of the terms 'blue' and 'green' and the neat square paragraph that each fiction occupies is juxtaposed with the complex effect the colour has upon the narrating consciousness.

Anticipating her use of chiaroscuro in "Time Passes," in 'GREEN' Woolf exposes the effects of light on colour. Like the central section of *To the Lighthouse*, the short story charts the progression of a single day as it passes into darkness. At the opening of the text it is morning, and the early light of dawn is refracted on the crystal lustre, making the colour green 'drip onto the marble' floor.<sup>24</sup> In this text light is indistinguishable from colour, and the colour green is only visible in the light of day; at night 'the needles drip blots of blue' (B&G, p. 142). Like paint, the

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<sup>21</sup> Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Famously, in *Orlando* (1928), the colour green is used by Woolf to highlight the discrepancy between language and the experience of colour: 'Green in nature is one thing, green in literature another. [...] The shade of green Orlando now saw spoilt his rhyme and split his metre' (*O*, pp. 16-17). Reflecting Woolf's own writing practices, Orlando's rhyme and metre seem to precede the words that fill his sentences.

<sup>23</sup> Sim, *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'BLUE. & GREEN.', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. ed. Susan Dick (New York and London: Harcourt Brace, 1985), p. 142. All further references to Woolf's short fictions are to this edition and title and page numbers will be presented parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

colour at this stage is mutable and unfixed, which fits with Woolf's practice of linking colour with movement, as Goldman notes: 'Colours [in Woolf's writing] are in one moment as fleeting as a firework display and in another as physically solid and sustaining as food.'<sup>25</sup> Colour dripping in blots conveys the thickness of undiluted paint in a state between stasis and liquidity.

Interestingly, in Bernard's concluding soliloquy in *The Waves*, Woolf re-uses but inverts her image of the lustre dripping colour onto the marble floor. Remembering various images from his childhood, he recalls blue light dripping from the crystal: 'flies droning round the nursery ceiling on which quivered islands of light, ruffled, opalescent, while the pointed fingers of the lustre dripped blue pools on the corner of the mantelpiece' (*TW*, pp. 193-94). In the short fiction, the concluding darkness of 'GREEN' enables the emergence of the colour blue at night. In the darkness of the text, Woolf is able to convey the 'sensation of blue' without the observation of it. The first image readers are presented with is a 'snub-nosed monster' who becomes a representation of the colour. In contrast to the refracted green light, in this text blue is represented as an overwhelming force closely associated with the power of the sea: 'The snub-nosed monster rises to the surface and spouts through his blunt nostrils two columns of water, which fiery-white in the centre, spray off into a fringe of blue beads. Strokes of blue line the black tarpaulin of his hide' (*B&G*, p. 142) Rather than simply name the colour, here Woolf experiments with the extent to which colour can exist without perception.

Sim considers the depiction of colour without reality as Woolf's method of challenging the 'naïve view' that 'assumes colours are properties that really are part of the object'.<sup>26</sup> Woolf's animation of colour reinforces the idea that it is not inherently contained within an object but oscillates upon the surface of it. Colour for Woolf is inherently part of surface tensions and can easily be transmitted from one material substance to another. Both reading and seeing are conceptualised by Woolf as a complex transfer of information brought about by an embodied

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<sup>25</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 114.

<sup>26</sup> Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, p. 60.

interaction with material reality. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf's philosophy of colour also underlines Lily Briscoe's experimental colourism. Lily's reduction of the complexity of everyday life into shapes of greens and blues recalls Woolf's earlier experimentation with colour in her short fiction while putting into practice Moore's thinking about whether colour can exist without perception. Central to Post-Impressionist painting was the use of simple, primary and complementary colours, which were often applied to the canvas without tonal blending and this can also be observed in Woolf's literary representation of Lily's painting process. An example of this simple use of colour can be found in Vanessa Bell's *Abstract Painting* (1914) in which six rectangular and square shapes are painted in bold blues, greens and reds against a background of yellow (fig. 1). In a similar manner, Lily Briscoe in the novel, builds shape through the thick application of colour: 'She could have done it differently of course, the colour could have been thinned and faded; the shape etherealised; that was how Paunceforte would have seen it. But



Fig. 1: Vanessa Bell, *Abstract Painting*, 1914. Oil on canvas.

then she did not see it like that. She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing lying on the arches of a cathedral' (*TL*, p. 54). Although simplicity underlines her use of colour upon the canvas, here Lily acknowledges the complex and diaphanous nature of the pigments. While the form of her work fits with Bloomsbury's emphasis on the simplicity of shape, this contrasts with the way Woolf represents the effects of colour as mutable and variable. Later in the novel, Woolf describes the colours as fluctuating: 'Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing' (*TL*, p. 186). While the colours are bright and vivid upon the surface of the canvas, they have the potential to melt and change like the iridescent colours on a butterfly. While the image of the 'butterfly's wing' enables Woolf to convey the way colour reverberates on surfaces, it also recalls her conceptualisation of textuality as a material exchange. As discussed in the introduction, in *The Waves* Bernard reference to 'butterfly powder', an image that resounds throughout the text, comes to signify the way in which light and colour can be captured and conveyed in writing.

### **The treasure chamber of Mrs Ramsay's past**

Although in the published edition of *To the Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe is the painter through which Woolf tests the expressive capacity of colour, in the manuscript Mrs Ramsay also plays a significant role in the text's early engagement with the visual arts. The draft material reveals that Woolf's mother's association with Pre-Raphaelite painters formed the basis for her characterisation of Mrs Ramsay. Then Julia Jackson, she was introduced, through her own aunt and uncle Sara and Henry Princep, to painters such as Edward Burne-Jones, George Frederick Watts and John Everett Millais.<sup>27</sup> Jackson was also a favourite subject of her aunt, the

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<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, and perhaps with reference to her great-aunt Sara Princep, Woolf had initially intended to name Mrs Ramsay 'Sara' (MSS, 6).



photographer Julia Margaret Cameron.<sup>28</sup> Woolf's mother, as Kate Flint notes, 'provided numerous links with the mid-Victorian High Art world' and the artists she knew became familiar visitors to the Stephens during Woolf's childhood.<sup>29</sup> In both the novel and the manuscript, Mrs Ramsay offers Charles Tansley an insight into the world of the visual arts, as they walk together in the early part of 'The Window'. However, in the manuscript Woolf provides further detail concerning 'Mrs Ramsay's past life amongst painters', which suggests her own potential to create visual art:

[Painting] was often a matter of considerable difficulty. ~~As~~ It had been her privilege to help sometimes in these studios. Thus she unveiled slightly the treasure chamber of her past. [...] With her sanction, [Tansley] too dismissed the Paunceforte school of ~~mod~~ painting [...] dismissed Mr Archer, with a smile, these pictures of grey sands & pink ladies [...] had obvious defects, since the painters [...] did not as Mrs Ramsay remembered her grandmother's friends doing, grind their colours for themselves, & keep them moist. (MSS 22)

Although Mrs Ramsay claims to have 'help[ed] sometimes' in the artist's studio, she possesses a great understanding of the painting process itself, and the ways in which paints can be made and stored. In the published edition of the novel, Mrs Ramsay recalls that the painters in her grandmother's circle 'first [...] mixed their own colours, and then they ground them, and then they kept damp clothes on them to keep them damp' (*TL*, p. 17). While in the novel, Woolf provides an association between Mrs Ramsay and the Pre-Raphaelites, in the manuscript she provides her with a more direct (albeit marginal) involvement in the painting process. It remains unclear why Woolf revised this aspect of Mrs Ramsay's characterisation before publication, but a correspondence with Vanessa Bell suggests that she was expecting ridicule about her depiction of the preparation of paints. Bell reassured her sister that 'we didn't laugh at the bits about painting – though I am a little doubtful about covering paints with damp cloths, but it *might* be done' (*VBL*, p. 318). In response, Woolf wrote back: 'I don't defend my accuracy, though I

<sup>28</sup> See Caroline Dakers, *The Holland Park Circle: Artists and Victorian Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Kate Flint, 'Virginia Woolf and Victorian Aesthetics', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 19-34 (p. 25).

think Watts used to buy lapis lazuli, break it up with a small hammer, and keep it under damp cloths. I think, too, the pre-Raphaelites thought it more like nature to use garden clay, whenever possible; to serve for colours' (*L3*, p. 379). In defending her accuracy, Woolf's letter reveals the extent to which she had researched the material practices of visual artists prior to writing her novel, which furthers her interdisciplinary approach to writing, as well as her profound interest in the processes of painting.

In the manuscript version of *To the Lighthouse* Mrs Ramsay's engagement with the visual arts is an aspect of her past that Woolf reveals only 'slightly'. Characterising her past experiences as a 'treasure trove', her 'past life amongst painters' is submerged within her present in both manuscript and published edition of the text. Yet, throughout the first draft of the manuscript, Woolf leaves traces of Mrs Ramsay's potential for artistic creativity. Returning to writing her novel on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1926, Woolf begins drafting the third part of 'The Window'.<sup>30</sup> Here Mrs Ramsay is depicted knitting a stocking she intends to give to the lighthouse keeper's little boy. As she knits, she thinks about photographs of the artists with whom she used to associate. The text also presents an image of Mrs Ramsay with her profile set against "one of those large brown ~~pictures~~ photographs of authenticated masterpieces (Michael Angelo, Titian) which, rigged in a cheap frame stood upon an easel.' (MSS 54). Excised completely from the published edition of the novel, this passage positions Mrs Ramsay within the frame of the photograph hanging upon the wall. Although she is not the creator of the image, Woolf make a clear association between Mrs Ramsay and the photographic reproduction of the unnamed work by an 'old master'. But the image also brings to mind the work of Julia Margaret Cameron, who often re-enacted Renaissance paintings through photography. As Maggie Humm argues: 'Cameron imitated the Renaissance painting technique *sfumato*, in which outlines and tones seem 'smoky' (the meaning

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<sup>30</sup> Although, in the manuscript, Woolf demarcates this section 'III' (Berg TL.NB1 MSS 53), the text drafted here corresponds with section five of the published edition. While the typescript of *To the Lighthouse* is missing, we can only assume that the nineteen sections of text that make 'The Window' were segmented at this stage of Woolf's compositional process.

of the Italian term). [Vanessa] Bell [in her photography] was devoted to Renaissance painting. Both she and Cameron employ the vocabulary of the Old Masters.<sup>31</sup> While this clarifies the influence of Cameron on Bell's work, the manuscript of *To the Lighthouse* further reveals Cameron's influence on Woolf's own text.

On the same manuscript page, Woolf draws attention to the photographs that are in Mrs Ramsay's possession: 'there were the old photographs, some of them, she recollected once hanging in her grandmother's house & bearing the signatures of great men whose colours had to be kept moist under damp cloths' (MSS 54). While these images re-establish Mrs Ramsay's part of a past art tradition, they also point towards Woolf's own association with the Victorian photographic tradition. Although the images depicted here possess the signatures of 'great men,' Woolf's reference to the medium of photography is an overt acknowledgement of her own association with her aunt, who was central to the nineteenth-century artistic tradition.<sup>32</sup> Woolf's references to photography not only enable her to associate her text with this form of visual art, but it also allows her to draw a parallel between her writing and the creativity of women. As Humm explains: 'Women were drawn to photography from the introduction of the medium in 1839 because photography involved an easily acquired skill and fewer barriers to participation in the arts.'<sup>33</sup> Providing them with a 'practical instrument with which to experiment with different representations of their place in the flux of modern life,' the technology of photography in the nineteenth century provided women with the means of engaging with the visual arts in a novel manner.<sup>34</sup> Often domestic in their subject matter, the early photographs created by women allowed them to represent their daily lives visually. Although Mrs Ramsay does not take photographs herself in the novel, she does translate her creativity into the domestic arts; for

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<sup>31</sup> Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> Maggie Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 214-30 (p. 215).

<sup>33</sup> Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures*, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Humm, *ibid.*, p. 217.

example, in the act of creating a stocking for the lighthouse keeper's little boy: 'So now she knitted a reddish brown stocking against the cheap easel and the brown Michael Angelo' (MSS 59). In the manuscript, then, Woolf creates an overt parallel between the 'high' art of painting and the domestic art of knitting. Although Mrs Ramsay creates her stocking for the benefit of another, her creativity is nonetheless informed by the Michael Angelo in front of which she sits. Both the colour of the painting and the stocking correspond with each other, and through knitting Mrs Ramsay transfers the visual signifiers of the ancient painting into her own material creation.

Although in the novel Mrs Ramsay's association with the visual arts is made less overt, in the manuscript Woolf uses her as a voice to challenge Charles Tansley's chauvinist views about women and painting. Noticing his lack of experience in the discourses of aesthetics, Mrs Ramsay provides Tansley with a language with which he can begin to critique painting. For the rest of his walk with her he begins to perceive her in painterly terms: 'She stood against the picture of Queen Victoria in widows [*sic.*] robes wearing the ribbon of the garter. Like a figure that had dredged the depths of the sea of bitterness & sorrow [...] with the stars in her eyes & purple veils about her hair' (MSS 22-23). Tansley's vision, however, attempts to modify the image of Mrs Ramsay into one of imperialism and suffering. His vision of her is one conditioned by his ascetic respect for patriarchal order. Mrs Ramsay's own views on aesthetics (formulated more coherently in the manuscript draft) acts as a counterpoint to his asceticism. While undertaking her 'great expedition' (*TL*, p. 140) with him to visit an ailing woman in the town, they stop and consider the Hebridean landscape before them:

The bay she meant. The ~~th~~ great plateful of sparkling blue water with the hoary lighthouse in the centre. & & [*sic.*] all round it, fading & falling, low desolate ~~grey like~~ with sand dunes & green with ~~g~~ wild flowing grasses which even across the water seemed to be running away into silence into wildness, into some eternal communion of their own. [...] & now, ~~she said,~~ artists had come, & there indeed [...] stood Mr Archer. [...] His painting, like almost all ~~that~~ painted there in the island; was a little spectral [...] was a little green & grey with a lemon coloured boat & a pink lady; but Mrs Ramsay [...] criticised art almost entirely ~~from the point of v~~ as she supposed her grandmother's friends would have criticised it. [...] First she told Mr Tansley, there was the business of

grinding the paints; next they needed to be soaked in salad oil. For among her grandmothers [*sic.*] friends there were many who mixed their own colours. [...] Mr Tansley was impressed by the extreme derision with which she pronounced against Mr Beardsley's lighthouse, directly they were out of hearing. (MSS 21).

Charles Tansley, in both the manuscript and the published text, aims to suppress Lily's desire to paint. However, in the manuscript it becomes evident that he admires Mrs Ramsay precisely because of her competence in her critique of Mr. Beardsley's work: 'Tansley was impressed by the extreme derision with which [Mrs Ramsay] pronounced against Mr Beardsley's lighthouse' (MSS 21). While Tansley is captivated by Mrs Ramsay's critical eye in the manuscript, in the published edition he finds it difficult conversing with her about painting: 'So Tansley supposed she meant him to see that that man's picture was skimpy, was that what one said? The colours weren't solid? Was that what one said?' (*TL*, pp. 17-18). Although he is unable to find the right language to respond to Mrs Ramsay's observations, Tansley perceives that her criticism of the artist's work stems from her disregard for his insipid colouration and a lack of solidity in his painting.

Although in the published text, Woolf certainly depicts Tansley's disregard for art, the manuscript provides further evidence for his dismissal of painting; when he is first introduced in the manuscript, Mrs Ramsay and her daughters attempt to engage Tansley in a conversation about 'pictures or poetry', but, he finds himself unable to relate to art of any kind: '[B]ecause he had the welfare of mankind at heart, [it] was very plain that you could not expect ~~him~~ working people to admire & enjoy beauty until they were certain of a nights lodging[.]' (MSS 11).

Identifying himself as a member of the working classes, who has 'been through [...] suffering, disorder & social injustice', he feels that no 'fine phrases could remedy' issues of class distinction (MSS 12). Considering art to be distinct from the everyday life of ordinary people, he dismisses it as something trivial, and in doing so mirrors the thesis of Mr Ramsay's lecture which 'would be dished up to the young men at Cardiff next month': '[Mr Ramsay] would argue that the world exists for the average human being; that the arts are merely a decoration imposed on the top of

human life; they do not express it' (*TL*, p. 49). Tansley's opinion that art is distinct from life is excised from the published edition, but it is an interesting strand of the manuscript which reveals the foundations of his dismissal of women artists. Significantly, Mrs Ramsay is critical of Mr Beardsley (who later becomes Mr Paunceforte in the published text) for precisely the same reasons as Lily Briscoe, and both women find his watery impressionism lacking strength and vibrancy. In contrast to Beardsley's work, Mrs Ramsay's language is characterised by vivid colours; she perceives the sparkling blue of the water, the greyish-white, or 'hoary,' lighthouse and the greens of the wild grasses that 'run away into silence.' Just as Lily Briscoe attempts to modify the white spaces of her canvas into shapes of 'greens and blues' (*TL*, p. 174), here Mrs Ramsay uses the same colours to depict her own vision of the landscape.

The identification of the colour blue and green between the two central figures of the novel enables Woolf's to draw a parallel between them. Although it remains unclear why Woolf excised Mrs Ramsay's past engagement with art, her residual association with painting establishes a connection between Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. If we read Mrs Ramsay as a representative of Pre-Raphaelite culture and Lily Briscoe as a Post-Impressionist artist, Woolf draws a continuation between the two aesthetic movements, and this speaks directly to her wider attempt to challenge the distinctions between painting and writing. Roger Fry strongly dismissed the Pre-Raphaelite movement as over-explanatory and literary. As Simon Watney notes:

Fry's objection to "literary" painting was in fact an objection to a specific literature – the culture of late Pre-Raphaelitism. And, even here, there is a contradiction, since the idea of purity and disinterest so central to his aesthetic position are unimaginable without the context of the British Aesthetic Movement of which, in his youth, he was so much a part.<sup>35</sup>

Fry's dismay for British painting, as Watney continues to suggest, influenced him to overlook similarities between Pre-Raphaelitism and Post-Impressionism, such as the use of bright colours, and a shared disregard for idealism: 'Fry was totally unable to grasp any of the specific

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<sup>35</sup> Watney, *English Post-Impressionism*, pp. 6-8.

continuities which run through late Pre-Raphaelite culture into English Post-Impressionism.<sup>36</sup> In the manuscript of *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf acknowledges a continuity between the Pre-Raphaelite movement and Post-Impressionism in her representation of Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. Despite Mrs Ramsay's creativity being left unfulfilled in terms of painting in the published text, Lily Briscoe inherits an aesthetic discourse from her, but modifies it to fit her own Post-Impressionist vision. While the published text hints towards a potential for visual creativity that Mrs Ramsay never translates into painting, the manuscript reveals that Woolf intended to associate Mrs Ramsay with her successor, Lily Briscoe. Although Lily's rejection of marriage certainly positions her as antithetical to Mrs Ramsay's world view, the manuscript reveals an underlying identification between the two women in terms of their ways of seeing; the similarity in the colours that Woolf associates with each of them also exposes their shared aesthetic vision.

### Early sketches

In many ways Mrs Ramsay anticipates the introduction of Lily Briscoe, who inherits but modifies her visual creativity. Both women, for example, use visual images to convey their experience of reality. When Marie, the Swiss woman serving the Ramsays at Skye, tells of her father's illness, Mrs Ramsay conveys her sympathy in visual terms: '[A]ll had folded itself quietly about her, when the girl spoke, as, after a flight through the sunshine the wings of a bird fold themselves quietly and the blue of its plumage changes from bright steel to soft purple.' (*TL*, p. 33). Kirsty Martin draws attention to the intersection between Mrs Ramsay's sympathy and her engagement with art; through Mrs Ramsay Woolf highlights an 'emotional appeal' in the formal structures of art, revealing that '[w]e can feel for things as well as people – for shape, pattern and colour'.<sup>37</sup>

Mrs Ramsay's sympathy is depicted, here, as a change of colour from steely blue to soft purple,<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Watney, *ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>37</sup> Kirsty Martin, *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy: Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 191.

<sup>38</sup> The colour purple is a colour often associated with death in Woolf's work. In *The Waves* (1931), for example, Rhoda perceives Percival's death as a 'purple light' slanting downwards, and she offers to his memory

but her use of colour to denote feeling is paralleled in Lily Briscoe's perception of her picture: 'She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing upon the arches of a cathedral.' (*TL*, p. 54). Mrs Ramsay's attention to steel is mirrored here, and the imagery of flight (the bird's plumage) is also echoed in Lily's analogy of the butterfly. What this suggests is an underlying association between the two central figures of the text, but Woolf's slight modification of their imagery implies a slight distinction in her development of Lily's emerging aesthetic.

The character of Mrs Ramsay was well formulated when Woolf began drafting the opening pages of *To the Lighthouse* in her manuscript, but the same cannot be said for Lily Briscoe. Returning to the initial plan she drafted on the third page of her manuscript, it is clear that Woolf did not primarily intend to depict 'a painter on paper' in her novel. Woolf's decision to include an artist in her novel came in August 1925. On page twenty-nine of the first volume of the manuscript, Woolf's narrative moves from Mr Ramsay pacing on the lawn to a 'kindly, rosy & well covered lady' named 'Miss Sophie Briscoe' (MSS 29). In contrast to the radical Post-Impressionist Lily becomes in the published edition, in the manuscript she is introduced as a more traditional artist. As Woolf reveals, she 'spent much of her life sketching [and] was rather fluttered when [Mr Ramsay] approached her end of the terrace' (MSS 29). Lily makes no attempt to hide her artwork as she does in the published novel, but the fact that she sketches rather than paints suggests that her artistic rebellion was not central to the novel at this stage. The term 'sketching' also implies that her art seems to be in the preparatory stages of creation. Woolf initially positions Lily as an amateur painter conditioned by her sense of inferiority to Mr Ramsay: 'She felt as if she, ~~being only a mortal~~, had need of a telescope, with which to communicate with him [...] so low as she was in the scale of intelligence[.]' (MSS 29). Lily's sense of inadequacy is foregrounded in the manuscript, but Woolf also characterises her as a

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'withered violets, blackened violets.' (*TW*, p. 172; p. 174). In *To the Lighthouse*, Lily's depiction of Mrs Ramsay as a purple triangle, similarly, associates the colour purple with tragedy.



woman much older than she is in the published edition: '[T]he mere thought of things that were in that man's head made her grave, an irresponsible old maid [...] (for though she had her offers of marriage she was glad, at 55, to think she had refused them all & retained her right to view male eccentricity from a distance[.]' (MSS 29). In the third section of the published edition, Lily inherits Mrs Ramsay's central position within the narrative; however, in the manuscript, her close position to her in terms of age characterises her as a foil to Mrs Ramsay rather her successor. Their contrasting views on marriage furthers this relationship in the manuscript, but unlike the published edition, Lily's dedication to her art is not conceptualised as a revolt against the institution of marriage.

Reserved rather than rebellious, the content of Lily's sketches in the draft also associates her with 'traditional' forms of artistic representation: 'Sophie Briscoe was glad that her own ~~gifts~~ ~~were~~ tastes were for nice hedgerows, cottages (especially the thatched cottages of the south) & ~~fiction, sunny garden~~ 'bits', like this of the pampas {jacmanna} grass against the sky which she was now painting & fiction[.]' (MSS 30). The 'jacmanna' is, however, represented in Lily's painting in the published edition of the novel where its colour (purple) is modified into the formal structures of her painting:<sup>39</sup> 'The jacmanna was bright violet; the wall staring white. [...] Then beneath the colour there was the shape' (*TL*, p. 23). Lily's emphasis on the distinctiveness of colour in the published edition is undoubtedly Post-Impressionist, and it corresponds with Fry's definition of the 'creative vision' which he defines in 'The Artist's Vision'. For the artist 'colours, which in nature have almost always a certain vagueness and elusiveness, become so definite and clear to him [*sic*], owing to their now necessary relation to other colours [...]. In such a creative vision the objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, and to take their bits in the whole mosaic of vision.'<sup>40</sup> In the published edition, Woolf's representation

<sup>39</sup> There is much debate as to what species of plant 'jacmanna' actually is; it may be Woolf's misspelling of 'jacmannii' a purple flowering plant of the clematis family.

<sup>40</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Artist's Vision', in *Vision and Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 33-8 (p. 36).

of Lily's colour vision similarly foregrounds the intensity of purple and white; the objects which convey those colours (the 'jacmanna' and the wall) disappear from her sight, before becoming part of her 'mosaic of vision', which is represented upon her canvas. Goldman draws a parallel between Fry's concept of 'mosaic vision' and the butterfly imagery Woolf uses to describe Lily's work.<sup>41</sup> Her representation of Lily's painting process in the published novel shares similarities with Fry's theorisation of Post-Impressionist aesthetics, but in the manuscript Lily's work does not assert her own 'creative vision'. In contrast, she is restrained by her verisimilitude. What is particularly striking in Woolf's initial sketching of the artist is her use of the term 'fiction' to describe the content of Lily's work: 'the pampas [...] grass against the sky which she was now painting & fiction' (MSS 30). If Lily's painting contains 'fiction', then it corresponds to the 'illustrative' and 'literary' aspects of painting that Bloomsbury aesthetics heavily criticised: visual aesthetics characterised as over-explanatory and antithetical to the pure expression of the 'aesthetic emotion in significant form.'<sup>42</sup> Woolf's initial characterisation of Lily as amateurish and lacking in confidence seemingly upholds the Bloomsbury notion that 'fiction' is antithetical to the expression of 'pure emotion' in radical painting.

However, Woolf's editorial strategies regarding her use of the term 'fiction' demonstrate that she was somewhat reluctant to use it, and her first use of the word is cancelled as soon as it is written. (The fact that Woolf uses purple, rather than black ink, to insert this cancellation indicates that it was done while drafting rather than revising this section.) Her second use of the term comes at the very end of the sentence; it is attached by an ampersand after the word 'painting.' Woolf is tentative in her use of the term and displays an awareness of its wider implications in the context of Bloomsbury aesthetic discourses. On the one hand, she aims to associate 'fiction' with the aesthetic theories and practices of her contemporary artists, and on the other, to defend her own creative medium, which was considered inferior to the 'pure art' of

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<sup>41</sup> Goldman, 'To the Lighthouse's Use of Language and Form', p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> Bell, *Art*, p. 14.

painting. As Reed demonstrates, in Bloomsbury formalism literature ‘signified an unhealthy emphasis on illusion at the expense of such formal values identified by Fry as rhythm of line, mass, proportion, light, shade, colour, perspective.’<sup>43</sup> Woolf’s depiction of Lily’s use of colour at this point in the manuscript may, however, shed light on her use of the term. The colours with which Lily paints in the draft are more in line with the ‘Paunceforte’ school of art, which Mrs Ramsay, in the manuscript, heavily criticises: ‘His painting, like almost all ~~that~~ painted ~~there~~ in the island; ~~was a little spectral~~ [...] was a little green & grey with a lemon coloured boat & a pink lady[.]’ (MSS 21). Painting ‘nice’ hedgerows and ‘thatched cottages’ (MSS 30), Woolf initially presents Lily Briscoe’s art in realist terms. In contrast to her vision of ‘bright violet’ and ‘staring white’ in the published edition, here there is no manipulation of colour into structures of significant form upon her canvas. Lily’s inability to assert her own Post-Impressionist aesthetic, leaves her mimicking her observable surroundings, which perhaps explains Woolf’s use of the term ‘fiction’. At this point Lily’s work is reminiscent of what Fry described the ‘literary artists’, who focus too heavily on subject matter. In his Preface to the Second Post-Impressionist exhibition of 1912, for example, Fry argues: ‘[Post-Impressionist] artists do not seek to give what can, after all, be but a pale-reflex of actual appearance, but to arouse the conviction of a new and definite reality. They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life.’<sup>44</sup> In the early draft of *To the Lighthouse*, Lily’s sketches convey precisely the ‘pale-reflex of actual appearance’ that Fry is referring to here. In contrast to the confidence displayed by Mrs Ramsay in her criticism of the painting methods of Paunceforte, Lily does not display an ability to transform her vision into structures of greens and blues as she does in the published edition. Woolf’s initial drafting of Lily’s tentative approach to painting, therefore, raises many questions about Woolf’s own engagement with the aesthetics of her contemporary

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<sup>43</sup> Christopher Reed, ‘Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf’s Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics’, in *Virginia Woolf*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2009), pp. 109-34 (p. 111).

<sup>44</sup> Roger Fry, ‘The French Post-Impressionists’, in *Vision and Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 166-70 (p. 167).

Post-Impressionists. Did she initially, in her early sketching of Lily Briscoe, intend to defend the ‘literary’ and ‘fictional’ aspects of literature that her contemporary painters despised? While the answers to this question can only be speculated upon, what is significant about the manuscript version of the novel is that it enables us to observe the development of Lily Briscoe’s characterisation from her initial position as a counterpoint to Mrs Ramsay in the first draft, to the inheritor of her (un-expressed) artistic creativity in the published edition of the novel. This is significant in our understanding of *To the Lighthouse* as a feminist text as it enables us to think about the intersection between Woolf’s depiction of Lily’s visual aesthetics as well as her feminist politics, both of which can be unearthed through an engagement with Woolf’s own textual processes.

### **So thinking she painted**

Roberta White argues that Woolf’s initial drafting of Lily Briscoe caused her much anxiety: ‘Woolf never felt entirely at ease in the world of painting, which she describes as alien and mysterious to those such as herself who occupy the world of words. It was with some trepidation that she developed the character of Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*.’<sup>45</sup> Ambiguously, White makes reference here to Woolf’s essay *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* (1934), as a way of reading Woolf’s cautious engagement with the visual arts over the course of drafting the novel. *Walter Sickert* was written seven years after the publication of *To the Lighthouse*, and in the essay Woolf apostrophises painting as a mythical and elusive being, indifferent to the author who attempts to find common ground. The essay is a fiction, but Woolf’s overall thesis is to influence collaboration between the arts and encourage an interdisciplinary approach to criticism: ‘All great writers are great colourists, just as they are musicians into the bargain; they always contrive to make their scenes glow and darken and change to the eye. [...] Nowadays we are all so

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<sup>45</sup> Roberta White, *A Studio of One’s Own: Fictional Women Painters and the Art of Fiction* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005) p. 84.

specialised that critics keep their brains fixed to the print, which accounts for the starved condition of criticism in our time[.]’ (‘WS’, p. 44). White’s reading of Woolf’s engagement with visual aesthetics as cautious and tentative overlooks the satirical tone she deploys in the essay in order to mock the distinctions upheld between the literary and the graphic arts. Although an examination of the manuscript of *To the Lighthouse* reveals that Woolf was initially reluctant to depict an experimental artist in her fiction, this aspect of Lily’s development was short-lived and Woolf soon modified her into a radical Post-Impressionist painter.

After a short break from writing in August, Woolf returned to her work on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1925.<sup>46</sup> In her diary on September 5<sup>th</sup> Woolf records her return to the text. The dating of the manuscript volume reveals that it was at this point that she revised her characterisation of Lily Briscoe:

I have made a quick and flourishing attack on *To the Lighthouse*, all the same – 22 pages straight off in less than a fortnight. I am still crawling & easily enfeebled, but if I could once again get up steam again, I believe I could spin it off with infinite relish. (*D3*, p. 39)

Here Woolf confirms that the opening twenty-two pages were written in the short space of time between August 6<sup>th</sup> and August 19<sup>th</sup>, in which the Woolfs situated themselves at Monks House for the summer. On Woolf’s return to her novel in September, she aimed to write with the superfluity she had written with before. Beginning on a clean page, she decided to re-draft the previous section she had been working on, in which Lily Briscoe is introduced as a painter of ‘cottage hedgerows’. As she did with this section of the text previously, she uses Mr Ramsay’s pacing as a means for moving panoramically between the figure of Mrs Ramsay at the window, to Lily Briscoe painting on the lawn. Woolf opens this section by writing: ‘Mr Ramsay’s pacing ground was bounded on the west northwest by a hedge; on the south east by ~~Miss~~ Lily Briscoe [...] who was painting & by ~~M~~ William Bankes who was watching her’ (MSS 31). In contrast to the initial introduction of Lily, in which her status as an ‘old maid’ is foregrounded, here Woolf

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<sup>46</sup> Woolf had been ill from mid-August after fainting at her nephew Quentin’s birthday party at Charleston; as a result, she was bed-ridden for a few weeks, which prevented her from progressing with her writing.

consciously moves away from signifying her marital status. Cancelling the term ‘Miss’ from her title highlights Woolf’s conscious decision not to centralise this aspect of Lily’s characterisation, and focus instead on her commitments to her art.

What is particularly significant about this opening sentence, however, is that it corresponds with a drawing Woolf sketched on the verso of the previous page; here, at the top, she draws the points of the compass (fig. 2). While at first it would seem that this drawing possesses little significance or relation to the novel, reading the image alongside the text demonstrates that Woolf was thinking about her writing in spatial terms. Positioning Lily, her easel, and William Bankes on the south-eastern side of the garden, and Mr Ramsay directly opposite on the northwest, Woolf composed a spatial map of the garden before she began drafting this section. This mapping technique enables her to move the narrative seamlessly from the consciousness of one character to another within a single location:

Now, for instance, when Ramsay bore down on them, shouting, gesticulating, Miss Briscoe, [William Bankes] felt certain, understood.

Someone had blundered.

Mr Ramsay glared at them. He glared at them without seeming to see them. That did make them both vaguely uncomfortable. Together they had seen a thing they had not meant to see. They had encroached upon a privacy. So, Lily thought, it was probably an excuse of his for moving, for getting out of ear shot, that made Mr. Bankes almost immediately say something about its being chilly and suggesting taking a stroll. She would come, yes. But it was with difficulty that she took her eyes off her picture. (*TL*, p. 23)

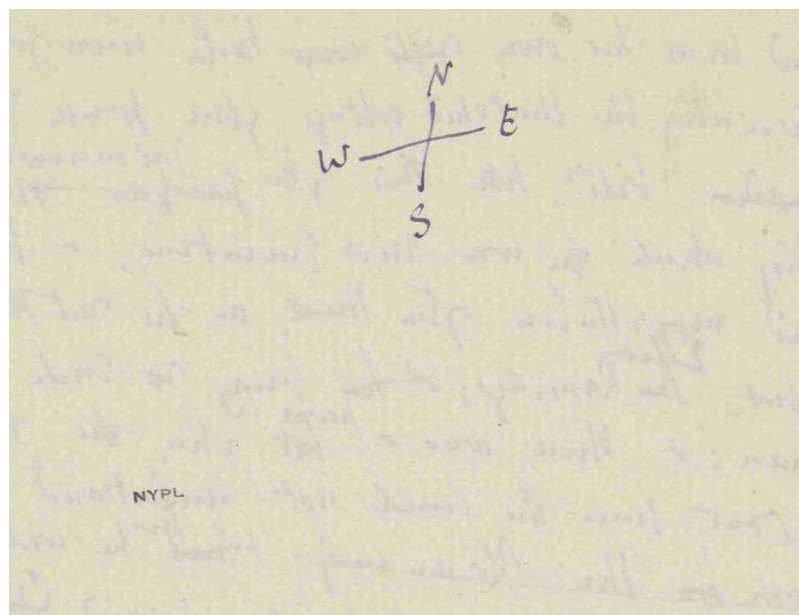


Fig. 2: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Notebook 1, p. 31. The Alfred A. and Henry W. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library.

Like the cutting of a camera angle in a film from one perspective to another, Woolf moves the narrative consciousness from William Bankes' thoughts about Lily, to Mr Ramsay glaring at both of them; it then shifts back to their shared feeling of discomfort in his presence, to Lily's thoughts about Bankes', and finally to her reluctance to take her eyes off her painting. In her work on Woolf and the cinema, Laura Marcus considers the cinematic techniques Woolf deploys in *To the Lighthouse*, arguing that:

[She] transmuted 'point of view' into the observation of perception itself, looking at people and being looked at, and creating a complex interplay of eyelines and sightlines within the text. [...] The image of a circling, encompassing vision evokes the multiple perspectives of cubist painting, as well as the shifting angles and multiple perspectives open to photography and cinematography.<sup>47</sup>

Comparing the passage of text from the published edition with its first draft in the manuscript (MSS 31-32), there is very little difference between the two suggesting that, for Woolf, the preliminary mapping of her work in this way was a successful technique for translating her visual ideas about her work into her writing. It enabled her to spatialise her narrative and think about differing points of perspective within a single setting. While in other works, such as *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf often rewrites single events from differing viewpoints in order to convey the subjective nature of experience, in *To the Lighthouse* visual perspectives (sight and seeing) play a more centralised role. Woolf's use of perspective and sight enables her to foreground the visuality of her text, and how ways of seeing underline her literary design for the novel.

From this point onward in the manuscript, the text becomes increasingly visual and Woolf experiments with the extent to which the effects of painting can be achieved in writing. Just as Andrew Ramsay tells Lily to 'think of a kitchen table, when you aren't there' (*TL*, p. 28),

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<sup>47</sup> Laura Marcus, 'The Shadow on the Screen: Virginia Woolf and the Cinema', in *The Tenth Muse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 99-178 (pp. 143-44).

so too does Woolf's ask us to visualise colour in its absence. In her attempt to modify her vision of the world into colour and structural form, Lily engages with Mr Ramsay's philosophical ideas about 'subject, object and the nature of reality' (*TL*, p. 28). While Woolf acknowledges that 'consciousness' plays a key role in the perception of colour, she also through the depiction of Lily raises questions about whether reality is mediated by our own subjective experience.

Anthony Uhlmann draws a comparison between Woolf's aesthetic ideas and that of Paul Cézanne. He highlights the fact that Woolf had been reading a biography of the artist in April 1923, and suggests that Cézanne's ideas are mirrored in Lily's painting practice:

As with Cézanne [...] there is a complex interaction around the idea of sensation: sensation is projected by external nature and seen, but then it needs to be organised by the internal nature of the artist (and the process of organisation, the understanding of compositional thinking required of the "mind" of the artist, has been that which has been in suspension for Lily, between the first and third parts of the novel). Once it has been organised or understood the sensation is transferred to the touch, with each touch constituting a sensation, laying down a sensation in turn on the canvas, which might then be experienced or confronted by a viewer.<sup>48</sup>

What Cézanne's work establishes, then, is the centrality of the thinking subject in the painting process. Rather than acting as a copyist of reality, the artist's 'mind' is the medium through which the nature of reality is conveyed to the viewer. This idea recalls the diary entry Woolf drafted before she began writing *To the Lighthouse*, in which she attempts to catch hold of the 'integrity' of her thoughts and then present them as 'works of art' on paper (*D3*, p. 102). In the entry, Woolf also acknowledges the fact that, like Cézanne, her creative impulses arise from her engagement with the material world. In her composition of *To the Lighthouse*, then, Woolf draws a parallel between this nascent aspect of her own writing practice and Lily Briscoe's methods of composition in order to expose the similarities between the writing and painting processes.

On page thirty-six of the manuscript, Woolf revises the fourth section of her novel in which Lily begins painting the purple jacmanna and the white wall. Closer to the version presented in the published edition, here Woolf presents the difficulties Lily faces in her work,

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<sup>48</sup> Uhlmann, 'Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury Aesthetics', pp. 67-8.



which ‘often brought her to the verge of tears’ (MSS 36). While earlier in the manuscript Mrs Ramsay criticised Paunceforte’s method of depiction, it is at this point in the text’s genesis that Woolf transposes Mrs Ramsay’s critical viewpoint to Lily when she observes the bay before her:

First, ~~it was the changing colour; the one could watch the pulse of colour, flood the bay {with blue} intermittently capriciously; {now} its it was now stained blue: now the heart expanded with it in deep deep & exquisite delight; we as the se as if next moment blue spread; & the body seemed swam; basking, only next instant, to be ruffled & checked & chilled by the breeze[.]~~ (MSS 38)

The passage recalls the earlier scene in which Mrs Ramsay and Charles Tansley look across the same bay as they venture into the town to run errands. Like Mrs Ramsay’s observations, here the narrative consciousness reflects her perception of ‘great plateful of sparkling blue water with the hoary lighthouse in the centre’ (MSS 21). Although Lily Briscoe’s consciousness is not presented through free indirect discourse, it is evident that Mrs Ramsay’s description is modified to incorporate Lily Briscoe’s emerging Post-Impressionist aesthetic. The colour blue is presented as mutable, with its ‘pulse’ reflective of the intermittent pulsations of the lighthouse, which reinforces an identification between Mrs Ramsay’s perception of light and Lily’s perception of colour. The term ‘pulse’ is associated with the life-force of the body and this reflects Cézanne’s thoughts about the physical sensations of colour. Colour ‘expands the heart’, but the chill of the night’s breeze checks the body’s rapturous response to blue. Woolf’s excessive cancellations, however, suggest a sense of frustration in the drafting of this passage. Rather than present the colour of the sky as ‘intermittently’ or ‘capriciously’ changing, Woolf presents the darkening of the sky in terms of seeping ink: ‘it was now stained blue’ (MSS 38). Woolf’s engagement with colour here is informed by the medium of both paint and ink, and this speaks directly to her conceptualisation of both textuality and aesthetics in terms of their material substances. The insolubility of paint at this point in the manuscript also mirrors her theory that art is a material exchange conditioned by the subjective perception of the reader or viewer.

Woolf experimentation with the visual and spatial aspects of her work is contemporaneous with the development of Lily Briscoe’s own painterly aesthetics in the

manuscript draft. In contrast to the timidity of Lily's character in the initial pages, in Woolf's revision she becomes more robust and assertive in her creative vision: '[Lily] had no fears for her easel, no fears that the astonishing man would speak to her[.]' (MSS 31). While in the published edition of the text, Lily would rather 'turn her canvas upon the grass' than have it looked at (*TL*, p. 22), here she lets it stand, which centralises Woolf revision of Lily as a confident and professional painter. Her picture does, however, quiver in the presence of Mr Ramsay: '[he] made the spray of purple jacmanna against the white washed wall also quiver' (MSS 31). Although more self-assured as an artist, Lily is still conditioned by the external reality in which she paints, as Woolf writes in a marginal note on this page of the manuscript: 'the violet blue against the dazzling white [was] inextricably for ever [*sic.*] associated with the moment' (MSS 31). For Lily, the present moment is inseparably associated with colour, and she reads her environment in terms of the impression that colour produces in her mind. Lily's response to colour, here, engages overtly with Moore's ideas about the 'sensations' of colour discussed earlier in this chapter. Yet, Fry's own thoughts about colour also have relevance here; in *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (1927), Fry underlines that the foundation of Post-Impressionism is '[t]he transposition of all the data of nature into values of plastic colour.'<sup>49</sup> Lily's experience of the 'present moment' of the garden is captured by her in the 'violet blue against the dazzling white' (MSS 31), and she transforms the 'data of nature' (the present moment) into plastic colours of blue, purple and white. Fry's engagement with the work of Cézanne, as Ann Banfield suggests, was highly influential to Woolf's own engagement with colour: 'Colour achieves a stone-like denseness in Woolf's descriptions, emulating Post-Impressionism's heavy color. [...] So convinced is Woolf of Fry's plastic color that in her descriptions the more color deepens to Cézannesque intensity, the heavier and more structured it becomes'.<sup>50</sup> Woolf's engagement with

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<sup>49</sup> Roger Fry, *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 57.

<sup>50</sup> Ann Banfield, *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 280.

colour, as Banfield notes, is indelibly associated with structural form, and she transposes this to her fictional artist in *To the Lighthouse*.

Like Cézanne who used ‘colour as a mode of form’, Woolf emphasises Lily’s observation that ‘beneath the colour there was the shape’ (*TL*, p. 23). The honesty of Lily’s perception of violet and white (‘she would not have considered it honest to tamper with the bright violet and staring white [*TL*, p. 23]) allows her to create significant form through her use of colour; rather than seeing ‘everything pale, elegant, semi-transparent,’ she perceives solidity beneath colour, and at this moment her artistic process moves towards, what Fry would describe as, a ‘formal purity’. Fry’s theories, as Watney observes, ‘were founded upon a belief in the existence of some essence, or lowest common denominator, shared by all “great” works of art. [...] art is constantly restoring itself to a state of Edenic “purity”, which is to be identified by a concern with particular internal formal values[.]’<sup>51</sup> Lily’s observation of structure beneath colour demonstrates her own pursuit of simple structural form; she searches for the scaffolding that underpins her observed environment. At the end of the published edition, we observe this in Lily’s description of her painting:

The whole mass of the picture was poised upon that weight. Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly’s wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses. And she began to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow there. (*TL*, p.186)

While at first the diaphanous nature of one colour ‘melting’ into the next seems to contradict the Post-Impressionist emphasis on thick colouration and solid form, when Lily begins to paint she layers the red and grey paint onto her canvas, and attempts to model her way into the hollow of her work. This hollow that Lily perceives in her canvas recalls her earlier perception of pure form beneath the ‘bright violet and dazzling white’. Throughout the drafting of the novel, Lily’s aesthetic moves further and further away from Impressionism to Post-Impressionism, but her

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<sup>51</sup> Watney, *English Post-Impressionism*, p. 3.

developing aesthetic is a progression rather than a complete rupture from past artistic traditions. As we have seen in the genesis of her character, Lily's origin began in Woolf's composition of Mrs Ramsay, and although Lily rejects nineteenth-century painting techniques, she inherits an aesthetic sensibility from her, which is demonstrated in their shared response to the blues and greens of the landscape. Although Mrs Ramsay does not paint her creative vision, Lily is able to solidify the present moment, her impression of Mrs Ramsay, the garden and the lighthouse, in formal structures of vivid colour. Through examining the manuscript draft of *To the Lighthouse*, this chapter brings to further light Woolf's conversations with Bloomsbury aesthetics. It exposes a juncture between her visual aesthetics in literary form and her feminism by charting Woolf's development of Lily Briscoe, a figure whose feminist expression materialises in visual signifiers and the palpable substances of paint.

## Chapter V:

### “Red, puce, purple-shaded”: Literary Mosaicking in *The Waves*

“There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves – a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution.”

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1931), pp. 99-100.

*The Waves* is firmly embedded in the material world. Although in her diary Woolf notes that ‘time shall be utterly obliterated’ in this text, and that the ‘actual event [shall] not exist’ (*D3*, p. 118), she pays particular attention to the materiality of objects and words. In childhood, Susan feels ‘tied down with single words’ (*TW*, p. 11), while Bernard makes ‘phrases and phrases’ in order to ‘interpose something hard between myself and the stare of the housemaid, the stare of clocks, staring faces, indifferent faces’ (*TW*, p. 22). Throughout her writing processes, Woolf displays an awareness that language has weight and substance. In drafting *To the Lighthouse*, as the previous chapter of this thesis suggests, Woolf tested the capacity of her language to convey structural form. In writing *The Waves*, she similarly made a conscious effort to sculpt her language into a sufficient shape: ‘All the time I shall attack this angular shape in my mind. I think the Moths (if that is what I shall call it) will be very sharply cornered. I am not satisfied though with the frame’ (*D3*, p. 219). Later in her writing process, a letter to Ethel Smyth further reveals her problem with the text’s shape: ‘It’s not the writing of the *Waves* [*sic.*] that takes time, but the architecture’ (*L4*, p. 354). As Woolf progressed to the final stages of composition, however, her earlier sense of solidity had fractured into disparate fragments, and she notes in her diary: ‘[T]his book is very queer business. [...] How to end, save by a tremendous discussion, in which every life shall have its voice – a mosaic – a – I do not know’ (*D3*, p. 298). However, as this chapter argues, the idea of the mosaic, a picture composed of distinct ceramic pieces, is an appropriate design for *The*

*Waves*, a text in which various fragments of speech are brought together to create a composite whole.<sup>1</sup>

An early review by Roger Pippett, published in the *Daily Herald* on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1931, captures the novel's paradoxical sense of solidity and fragmentation: '[In *The Waves*] Virginia Woolf shatters the glass of life and then catches the reflection in the fragments, showing us pictures we should never have dreamt of finding when the glass was safely sealed in its frame.'<sup>2</sup> Pippett's review draws attention to the text's sense of unity and disparity; for him, Woolf has shattered 'the sealed frame' of the novel, and 'show[n] us pictures' from various and disparate perspectives. There is a sense of solidity in Pippett's early review of *The Waves*, and his description of the narrative as broken glass contrasts sharply with the tendency in subsequent criticism to read *The Waves* as intangible, fluid, and removed from everyday life.<sup>3</sup> '[T]he six [speakers] share games and fears,' writes Erin Kay Penner, 'speaking in voices that weave seamlessly together, Woolf excludes [...] much of their cultural milieu and in this regard it is an insular book.'<sup>4</sup> Kay Penner's statement demonstrates a tendency in criticism to overlook the cultural and material artefacts that underpin the narrative, and, as a result, it perpetuates the assumption that *The Waves* is 'difficult' and 'vague'.<sup>5</sup> Although Mark Hussey acknowledges the materiality of *The Waves*, he considers it an 'aesthetic failure' because of its supposed lack of cohesion: '[The text] is useful as storehouse of typical ideas, but no more than this. It is a kind of warehouse in which are found the materials from which novels such as *To the Lighthouse* and

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<sup>1</sup> Rather than turn to the manuscript version of the text, this chapter takes as its focus the published edition of the novel. My MA dissertation charted the textual development of *The Waves*, and considers Woolf's shift from a use of omniscient narration to the soliloquies, which takes place in the draft material. Its focus is the discrepancies between language and subjective experience.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Pippett, 'Fiction Worth Reading', *Daily Herald* (8<sup>th</sup> October 1931), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Zwerdling overlooks *The Waves* in his study *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (1986), writing: 'the relentlessly elevated discourse of the book denied entry to the prosaic, the comic, the particular'. Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Erin Kay Penner, 'The Order of a Smashed Window Pane: Novel Elegy in Woolf's *The Waves*', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 61.1 (2015), 63-91 (68). Available at <http://tcl.dukejournals.org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/content/61/1/63.full.pdf+html> Accessed Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart N. Clarke, 'Editorial', *Virginia Woolf Bulletin*, 5 (2000), n.p. Print.

*Between the Acts* may be created.<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to undermine its status as one of Woolf's 'major' works, Hussey considers the novel incomplete, a work in which the 'stuff' of other fictions can be stored for later use. The statement exaggerates a sense of disparity in the narrative: the material Hussey perceives in the text is stored sporadically in an imagined warehouse. The text, he suggests, is little more than a collection of disparate material and not a complete aesthetic whole.

Although there are many references in *The Waves* to the material substance of language, critics continue to comment on the intangibility of the text. J. Hillis Miller, for example, uses a digital analogy to describe the way the six speakers share images and phrases in each of their soliloquies; he suggests that there is a 'memory bank of data,' from which the speakers 'download' the content of their speeches:

*The Waves* presupposes a vast impersonal memory bank that stores everything that ever happened, every thought or feeling of every person. This data bank, however, is absent. It is not accessible to direct experience. The thoughts and feelings it stores, moreover, are always already turned into appropriate language, complete with figures of speech for sensations and feelings that cannot be said literally.<sup>7</sup>

While this argument recalls Hussey's 'warehouse' metaphor for *The Waves* as a storage space of objects, Hillis Miller dislocates the text from the materiality of the real world; his 'data bank' analogy suggests that the text exists within a digital, rather than material, reality. In this statement, Hillis Miller also exaggerates the distinction between direct experience and language. For him, the language used by the speakers is artificial: it is generated from a digital storage space rather than created by a thinking subject. While Hillis Miller does acknowledge that the speakers engage to some extent with material objects, he questions: 'Is a given item "really there," or is it just imagined?'<sup>8</sup> Suggesting that the narrative exists either in the consciousness of the speakers,

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Hussey, *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986), p. 82.

<sup>7</sup> J. Hillis Miller, 'The Waves as Exploration of (An)aesthetic of Absence,' *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 83.3 (Summer, 2014), 659-77 (668).

<sup>8</sup> Hillis Miller, 'The Waves as Exploration of (An)aesthetic of Absence', p. 664.

or in a collective data bank of memory, Hillis Miller denies that *The Waves* contains any granite-like substance from which creativity can be formed.

Despite this, both Hillis Miller and Hussey's statements, in many ways, anticipate the materialist approach critics have taken towards *The Waves* in recent years. Ryan, for example, reads the text as evidence of Woolf's engagement with early twentieth-century discoveries in the physical sciences; he draws attention to the symbiosis between life and material objects in the text's final soliloquy: '[Bernard] betrays an awareness of [the] illusory nature of life and the pretence of human agency over it as though it is an object to be captured and cultivated.'<sup>9</sup> Like Susan, who aims to master her emotions by manipulating them, here Bernard's understanding of his life, as Ryan suggests, is a solid object that can be shared with his friends.<sup>10</sup> More recently, Randall asserts that, because of its materialism *The Waves* is Woolf's most 'everyday' work; in particular, she argues that the form and style 'is where the everydayness of the novel primarily resides'.<sup>11</sup> For Randall, conventional narrative strategies lack an ability to convey the multitudinous nature of everyday experience:

We are not going to be able to understand the everyday by using the formal features or the kind of language that have been put forward as obviously appropriate to it. Thus the highly experimental form of *The Waves* ... [is] precisely what makes it able to shed light on the everyday.<sup>12</sup>

Randall suggests that the experimental form of the novel enables Woolf to convey the 'everyday' from various perspectives. This chapter will consider the way Woolf achieves this radical form, arguing that her mosaic design allows her to foreground the material substance of everyday life.

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<sup>9</sup> Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> In the final section of the narrative, Bernard attempts to share the substance of his life with his companion: 'The illusion is upon me that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed. This, for the moment, seems to be my life. If it were possible, I would hand it to you entire. I would break it off as one breaks off a bunch of grapes. I would say, "Take it. This is my life."' (*W*, p. 191)

<sup>11</sup> Bryony Randall, 'Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and the Everyday', *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 26.3 (2015), 173-193 (180). Available at [http://www.tandfonline.com/abc.cardiff.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1080/10436928.2015.1061903](http://www.tandfonline.com/abc/cardiff.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1080/10436928.2015.1061903).

<sup>12</sup> Randall, 'Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and the Everyday', 178.



In doing so, it will consider how *The Waves* fits within Bloomsbury artistic culture, which sought to emphasise the utilitarian ‘everydayness’ of visual art.

In his theory of colour, Fry used the image of the mosaic as an analogy for the interplay between wholeness and particularity, which speaks directly to the sense of unity and disintegration that characterises the narrative of *The Waves*. In ‘The Artist’s Vision’ Fry writes:

Any turn of the kaleidoscope of nature may set up in the artist [a] detached and impassioned vision, and as he [*sic.*] contemplates the particular field of vision, the (aesthetically) chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begin to crystallise into a harmony [...]. In such a creative vision the objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, and to take their place [...] in the whole mosaic of vision.<sup>13</sup>

By looking at a solid object in the observable environment, the artist in a state of detachment loses sense of the coherence of material artefacts, which fracture into particular forms and colours. Objects lose their solidity on being looked upon, splintering into distinct colours, but the artist reaffirms the ‘significant form’ of the original object through the arrangement of paint upon the canvas. Vanessa Bell, as this chapter discusses below, exemplifies this technique in her juxtaposition of the particularities of colour and structural form. Bell builds shape through the repetition of colour upon her canvas; she layers colour without blending, achieving a prismatic effect in what she described as her ‘mosaicking’ technique (*VB*, p. 119). In *The Waves*, Woolf’s own repetition of colours, phrases and imagistic iconography, as this chapter suggests, allows her to create her own mosaic effect, which mirrors her sister’s work, but it also enables her to foreground the materiality of language and colour and how this underpins the supposedly detached soliloquies that structure the narrative.

### **The modernist mosaic**

Although ancient in origin, the mosaic can be considered an appropriate metaphor for modernism’s aim to re-shape old material into new formal structures. In its re-assembly of

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<sup>13</sup> Fry, *Vision and Design*, pp. 35-6.

stone, glass, or coloured tiles, the mosaic is a composition which brings together fragments of used materials, creating a new image or pattern. The mosaic's origin in the ancient world also fits with the modernist tendency to look to classical cultures as a point of origin, and an influence for renewal. It was used as a mode of visual expression by Pablo Picasso in his later work of the 1950s, but in 1912, Picasso was the first artist to introduce *papier-collé* (or collage) to easel painting.<sup>14</sup> Like the mosaic, the collage brings together disparate pieces of synthetic material (paper, cotton, wallpaper) in new surface arrangements. Similarly, Kurt Schwitters, an artist who was also renowned for his collage work, aimed to create 'new art forms out of the remains of a former culture.'<sup>15</sup> Artists working in this medium aimed to interrogate the dimensions of visual art and the fixity of the framed canvas; as Jane Goldman notes: '[B]y intruding onto the picture surface disparate fragments and materials (however flat), garnered from, and still some sense of, the outside world, the collage in itself will always challenge such framing' (emphasis in original).<sup>16</sup> Picasso's collages often incorporated materials such as wallpapers, train tickets, newspaper cuttings and music scores, bringing the substance of 'everyday' material to the forefront of visual art.<sup>17</sup> The collage, therefore, undermines the high cultural value of painting by associating it with the low, disposable value of everyday ephemera.

Picasso's use of collage was influential for Vanessa Bell, who also deployed the technique in her work in 1914. At Picasso's home in France, she had been introduced to him by Gertrude Stein in 1912, and a letter to Duncan Grant reveals her enthusiasm for his work:

We went to see Gertrude and she took us to Picasso's studio. [...] The whole studio seemed to be bristling with Picassos. All the bits of wood and frames had become like his pictures. [...] One gets hardly any idea of them from the photographs, which often don't show what is picture and what isn't. They are amazing arrangements of coloured papers and bits of wood which somehow do give me great satisfaction. He wants to carry them out in iron. Roger [Fry] recommended aluminium[,] (*VBL*, p. 160)

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<sup>14</sup> Jane Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Kurt Schwitters quoted in Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945*, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Goldman, *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Picasso's *Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper* (1913). In *Bus Tickets* (c. 1913), Roger Fry similarly superimposes three tickets upon post-impressionist structures of colour, drawing a parallel between his formalism and everyday materialism.

What is interesting about Bell's letter is that she chooses not to focus on the content of the paintings, or what they represent, but rather she turns her attention to the materials used within the artworks. Bell notices a lack of distinction between artwork and frame, and also the room itself; the content of the paintings spill from their frame into the walls of the studio, and there is also a clear sense of the overlapping intrusion of material within the spaces of the frame.<sup>18</sup> In *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* (2004), Goldman reads this letter as evidence of Bell's understanding of 'aesthetic disruption', and how the incorporation of 'three-dimensional materials into the painting, confuses the boundary between art and life.'<sup>19</sup> In her own collage work, Bell uses predominantly printed texts to blur the distinction between everyday material and her creative expression. In *Still Life (Triple Alliance)* (c. 1914), for example, she covers her canvas completely with newspaper cuttings (fig. 1). The papers have been stained burnt orange, and onto them she applies thick pastel blues, greens and pinks in spots of colour on the surface. The main focus of the composition is a table, upon which stands a lamp, a wine bottle and a larger glass bottle on the right of the image. Bell builds the shape of the third bottle, by painting a light blue colour around a label, which on closer inspection is, in fact, a pay slip. While this draws attention to the material circumstances that condition the production of art, which speaks directly to Woolf's focus on the 'grossly material things' that influence women's creativity in *A Room of One's Own* (AROO, p. 36). Although Bell has taken care to obscure the details of the pay slip with paint, as well as blotting newspaper headings with colour, the painting brings together text and image to create an interior, domestic scene.

While in this painting, Bell's collagistic technique blurs the distinction between 'everyday' ephemera and high art, in the inclusion of newspapers, pay slips, and maps on her canvas, her deployment of colour also suggests a sense of unity and fragmentation. Painting in spots, she

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<sup>18</sup> The reference in Bell's letter to coloured papers and bits of wood suggests that she is referring to one of Picasso's collages, perhaps his *Guitar* series of work (1912- 1914) which contains both of these elements.

<sup>19</sup> Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945*, p. 56.

arranges colour in various patterns upon the surface of her canvas. In her letters, Bell describes this as her ‘mosaicing’ [*sic.*] approach. As she explains in a letter to Roger Fry:

I’m painting in an entirely new way (for me). [...] I’m trying to paint as if I were mosaicing [*sic.*], not by painting in spots, but by considering the picture in patches, each of which has to be filled by one definite space of colour, as one has to do with woolwork, not allowing myself to brush the patches into each other. (*VB*, p. 119)

While Woolf thought about the image of the ‘mosaic’ as a means to draw together disparate voices in *The Waves* (*D3*, p. 298), Bell used the technique in order to fill space with colour. Like Woolf’s mosaic narrative, Bell creates unity by linking together patches of paint, and she aims to give the effect of solid colour by layering pigment upon pigment onto her canvas. Bell’s reference to ‘woolwork’ here is another metaphor she shares with her sister, as Woolf frequently described her writing processes in terms of ‘woolgathering’, which centralises the way in which both sisters think about their work in material terms. While drafting *A Room of One’s Own*, for example, Woolf notes in her diary: ‘My mind is woolgathering away about Women & Fiction, which I am to read at Newnham in May. The mind is the most capricious of insects – flitting, fluttering’ (*D3*, p. 175).<sup>20</sup> Although it is difficult to determine which painting Bell is referring to in her letter, her ‘woolwork’ or mosaicking technique can be observed in many of her works: in *The Pond at Charleston, East Sussex* (c. 1916), for example, she describes the trees surrounding the pond by applying pigments of mustard-yellow, ochre, greens and royal blue in strokes of colour upon the canvas (fig. 2). The technique is most noticeable in her portraiture, particularly in the series of portraits she painted of Virginia Woolf in 1912. However, Bell’s mosaicking can also be observed in her design for the dust-jacket that accompanies *The Waves*; here she prints spots of olive-green paint onto a cream background, and together these give the impression of a woman and a man standing before waves of the same colour. In both Bell’s work and *The Waves* there is a paradox of unity and fragmentation, and this chapter aims to interrogate, firstly, the prominent

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<sup>20</sup> Orlando similarly describes writing as ‘mere wool-gathering; this sitting in a chair day in, day out, with a cigarette and a sheet of paper and a pen and an ink pot’ (*O*, 241).

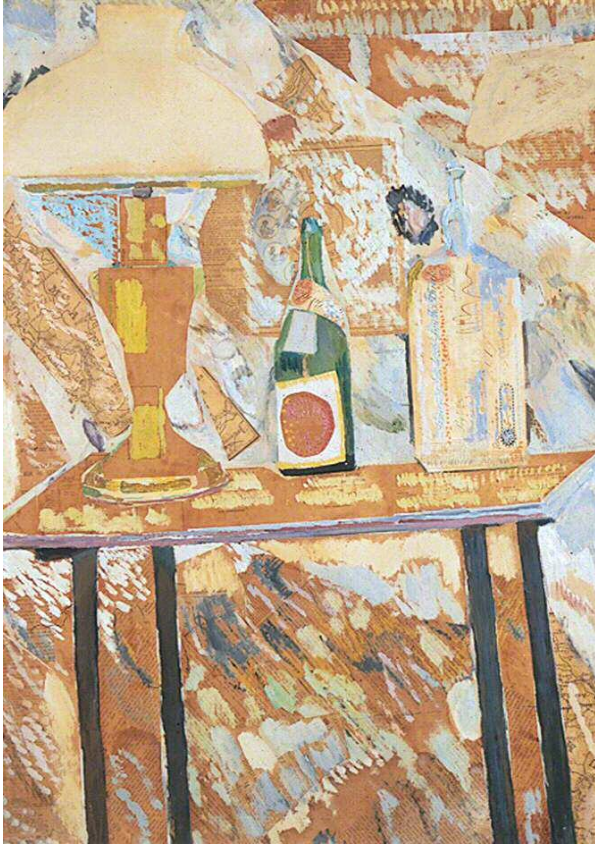
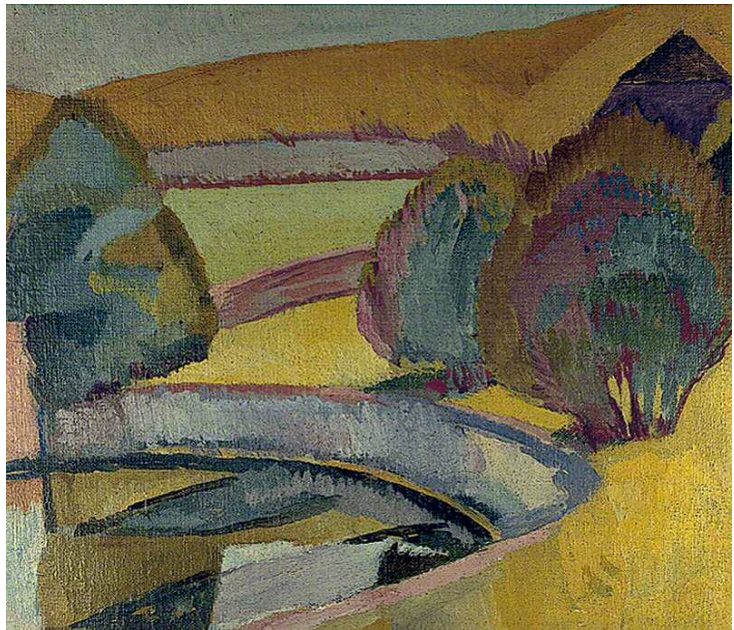


Fig 1: Vanessa Bell, *Still Life (Triple Alliance)*, c. 1914. Collage with paper, oil and pastel on canvas.

Fig. 2: Vanessa Bell, *The Pond at Charleston*, c. 1916. Oil on canvas.



role colour and vision plays in Woolf's literary mosaicking, while drawing comparisons with Lily Briscoe's Post-Impressionist use of colour in *To the Lighthouse*. It also considers the similarities between Bell's mosaicking technique and Woolf's narrative. Finally, by highlighting the text's preoccupation with materiality, it will challenge the assumption that *The Waves* is removed from 'everyday' life, and will situate it within the context of Bloomsbury materialist and domestic culture.

### Visual Patterning

While the structure and form of *To the Lighthouse* was clear to her from the outset of composition, Woolf's approach to writing *The Waves* was profoundly different. Frequently in her diary, Woolf describes her conception of the text in abstract and mystical terms: 'The Moths? That was to be an abstract mystical eyeless book: a playpoem. And there may be affectation in being too mystical, too abstract' (*D3*, p. 203). Woolf's design for the novel was underlined by images. Two months before the publication of *To the Lighthouse*, she makes a note of her early thoughts about her design:

I must record the conception last night between 12 & one [*sic.*] of a new book. I said I would be on the watch for symptoms of this extremely mysterious process. [...] I toyed vaguely with some thoughts of a flower whose petals fall; of time all telescoped into one lucid channel through wh. my heroine was to pass at will. The petals falling. (*D3*, p. 131)

In its simplest state, the image that encapsulates Woolf's impulse for *The Waves* is that of a flower contained within a vase while its petals fall, which suggests the passage of time. Although the published edition contains no single 'heroine' passing through a lucid (but seemingly tangible) channel of time, the image of the 'many-petalled' flower is present at the table of the first dinner scene within the text. As Bernard notes: 'There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves – a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution' (*TW*, pp. 99-100). Bernard's understanding of the subjective nature of perception recalls Lily Briscoe's

conception of her own expressionist painting process: her art is a subjective expression of her Post-Impressionist creative vision. In *The Waves*, Bernard notes that each of the six individuals bring their own contribution to the image of the carnation. The variations of the colour red and the undertones of purple that can be perceived in its petals, signifies a multi-faceted and ‘prismatic’ nature of visual experience. The flower itself is a ‘whole’, but each individual sees it differently. This image is one that Woolf remembered vividly from her childhood. In her memoir, ‘[A] Sketch of the Past’, her memory of a single flower influences her conceptualisation of the ‘moment of being’, but it also symbolises for her a sense of unity and distinction: ‘I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; “That is the whole,” I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower was part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower [...]. It was a thought that I put away as being likely to be very useful to me[.]’ (‘SP’, p. 84). While the attention Woolf pays to the flower becomes synonymous with her instincts for writing (looking at it, she suggests, gives her the ‘shock capacity’ that makes her a writer) its bisection in the earth and its spread of distinct leaves provides her with a means of conceptualising wholeness and particularity, which is central to her design for *The Waves*. Another image that influenced this aspect of the text was a letter from Vanessa Bell, written while she visited Cassis in 1927, in which she describes large moths circling around a lamp, coming together momentarily and then leaving (*VBL*, p. 314). What both these images convey is a sense of fixity and movement: the flower remains still, while its petals fall; the carnation is solid red, but its colours are mutably perceived; the light of the lamp is fixed, while the moths flutter ‘madly in circles’ round it (*VBL*, p. 314).

Although the image of moths circling a lamp is not centralised in the published version of the text, it is incorporated into one of Susan’s soliloquies in the sixth section of the text: ‘The lamp kindles a fire in the dark pane. A fire burns in the middle of the ivy. I see a lit-up street in the evergreens [...] no sound breaks the silence of our house, where the fields sigh close to the door. The wind washes through the elm trees; a moth hits the lamp[.]’ (*TW*, p. 138). Woolf

frequently presents the notion of stasis and kinesis in order to represent a dual nature of reality: an interaction between the material substance that underpins the real world, and the conscious mind comprehends it. For Ryan, Woolf's concept of 'granite and rainbow,' formulated in 'The New Biography' (1927), 'offer[s] a model of theorising that is in itself embedded in the material world at the same time that it conceptualises that materiality.'<sup>21</sup> He argues that, throughout her writing, Woolf contrasts the 'granite-like solidity' of fact with the 'rainbow-like intangibility' of fiction and aesthetics.<sup>22</sup> As the previous chapter of this thesis demonstrates, Lily Briscoe's prismatic creative vision is underlined by the truth, and her intention not to 'tamper with the bright violet and staring white' (*TL*, p. 23). Like 'light on a butterfly's wing,' her colours 'burn on a framework of steel' (*TL*, p. 54). The diaphanous nature of Lily's colour-vision is underlined by the granite-like integrity of the material world, and her painting process reveals the dualism between the granite of reality and her subjective creativity. Similarly, the speakers of *The Waves* take note of the solidity that underpins their existence. Throughout her adult life, Jinny compares herself to a reed rooted but flowing beneath a stream (*TW*, p. 80), an image that recalls Woolf's conception of the text in terms of fixity and stasis. In writing, Louis intends to solidify his observations of a blue and green landscape, 'to fix in words, to forge a ring of steel, ... [to write] poetry' (*TW*, p. 30). Bernard, 'requires the concrete in everything' so that he can 'lay hands upon the world. A good phrase seems to me to have an independent existence. Yet I think that it is likely that the best are made in solitude. They require some final refrigeration, which I cannot give them, dabbling always in warm soluble words' (*TW*, p. 53). Here Bernard resents the insipid solubility of his writing, suggesting that his language needs to be solidified in order to make it permanent. Throughout *The Waves*, Woolf offers her readers an insight into the conscious processes that comprehend and conceptualise language and its materiality.

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<sup>21</sup> Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'The New Biography', in *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 95-100 (p. 95).



Colour is also often closely associated with single words and phrases in *The Waves*, which also work to reinforce its material visuality. Rhoda, for example, uses the analogy of a tree as a symbol for her dreams: 'I [...] let my tree grow, quivering in green pavilions above my head' (*TW*, p. 42). Later, she thinks about time in terms of colour: 'June was white. I see the fields white with daisies and white with dresses' (*TW*, p. 49). In *The Waves*, Woolf transposes insubstantial concepts (here dreaming and time) onto the simple colours of green and white, and in doing so identifies abstraction with basic units of colour in her writing. Rudolf Arnheim, in his discussion of concrete poetry, demonstrates the significance of language as a source of visual stimulus: 'It is the double existence of words as a species of pure shapes and as a non-sensory carrier of sense that has made language the most telling symbol of modern civilized life. This symbolic role of language is displayed in the images and verbal weaves of concrete poetry.'<sup>23</sup> Woolf's use of language is also imagistic in *The Waves* in that it uses concrete images to convey a complex totalising emotions. This can be observed in Louis' description of London: 'The roar of London. [...] All are merged in one turning wheel of single sound. All separate sounds [...] are churned into one sound, steel blue, circular' (*TW*, p. 106). Like the 'leaden circles' of Big Ben's chime in *Mrs Dalloway* (*MD*, p. 4), here the mechanical sounds of London are envisioned in the image of the circle. In her consideration of imagist poetry, Wendy Steiner draws attention to the intersection between imagery and language: 'It was an essential tenant of imagism [...] that poetry must be remodelled in order to become iconic of reality. To do so, it must become like Chinese script, whose characters are pictorial icons [...] of their referents. Chinese writing was supposedly universal in its intelligibility. [...] The aim, then, was for poetry to achieve this same universality through its imagery.'<sup>24</sup> Woolf's use of the circle to signify the sounds of London, the shape is also used in the text as a means of describing poetry and fiction: Louis poem is a 'ring of steel' (*TW*, p. 30), while Bernard's novel is a 'globe' of ideas (*TW*, p. 205). Throughout the text,

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<sup>23</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, 'Visual Aspects of Concrete Poetry', *Yearbook of Comparative Criticism*, 7 (1972), 109.

<sup>24</sup> Wendy Steiner, *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 24.

Woolf centralises the visuality of language in terms of both colour and shape. Although art, visually perceived, appeals directly to the receptors of the eye, language has a ‘double existence’ in that the shape of letters and words can be seen visually, but ‘as a non-sensory carrier of sense’ it also has the capacity to generate the effects of visual stimulus in the mind.<sup>25</sup>

The relationship between language and colour is foregrounded in the first section of *The Waves* when the speakers are introduced to the grammatical conventions of language. While Miss Hudson teaches them Latin, both Susan and Jinny think of language in terms of colour:

“Those are white words,” said Susan, “like the stones one picks up by the seashore.”

[...]

“Those are yellow words, those are fiery words,” said Jinny. “I should like a fiery dress, a yellow dress, a fulvous dress to wear in the evening.” (*TW*, 14)

The children’s initial engagement with language is a sensory experience. While Louis is drawn to the sound of language, both Jinny and Susan associate colour with words, and these colours convey a sense of the girls’ developing identities. Susan draws a parallel between the colour white she perceives in language and the stones by the seashore at her home.<sup>26</sup> While solidity forms the basis of Susan’s understanding of language, Jinny’s thoughts stray from the text she is reading to her future life at London party, as she envisions the colours of the dresses she hopes to wear. Woolf’s use of colour, here, provides an insight into the future lives of her characters, but she also uses colour to build visual colour associations for each of her speakers. This can be observed most prominently in the text’s female characters, which suggests a more politicised use of colour if read in conjunction with Woolf’s feminism. Colours that convey warmth and vitality, such as reds, yellows and oranges, are closely associated with Jinny. Woolf uses these colours to emphasise her commitment to the present moment, and the physical experience of everyday life, but they also, as this chapter will argue, suggest an identification with the colours of British

<sup>25</sup> Arnheim, ‘Visual Aspects of Concrete Poetry’, 109.

<sup>26</sup> Susan frequently reveals the coastal location of her home in Lincolnshire, and recalls the waves that sound outside her home: ‘At home, the waves are mile long. On winter nights we hear them booming’ (*TW*, pp. 33-34).

imperialism. The suffrage colours of white, green and purple are associated with both Susan and Rhoda. In the garden in childhood, Rhoda floats white rose petals in brown basin, pretending that they are ships 'swimming from shore to shore' (*TW*, p. 12). Rejecting 'red petals of hollyhocks or geranium' (*TW*, p. 12), she consciously selects white to convey her creative vision: 'I have picked all the fallen petals and made them swim. I have put raindrops in some. I will plant a lighthouse here, a head of Sweet Alice' (*TW*, p. 13). Rhoda's decision not to use red petals demonstrates her rejection of a colour of British imperialism, but it also signals her ongoing identification with the colour white and its association with feminism. The imaginary lighthouse that Rhoda creates, here, also brings to mind the work of Lily Briscoe, suggesting a sense of continuity between Lily and Rhoda's visual creativity. This chapter, however, pays particular attention to the two most marginal figures in critical scholarship on *The Waves*, Susan and Jinny, and offers new ways of thinking about their relationship to visual and material culture. In doing so, it highlights the colourism that Woolf weaves into their soliloquies and how this enables us to read their embeddedness within the political and material culture of the early twentieth century. By examining the way that these visual signifiers function, the chapter rereads these figures as both complicit in and resistant to the patriarchal structures of British Imperialism.

### **Sullen, storm-tinted and all one purple**

Of the three women in *The Waves*, Susan is considered the most traditional. She marries, has children, and lives rurally amongst 'the mud, the mist and the dawn' (*TW*, p. 77). Her supposedly 'conventional role' within the narrative has, however, resulted in a critical oversight of the visual creativity she expresses and her use of colour and formal shape in her speeches. Jack F. Stewart, for example, in his discussion of visual symbolism in *The Waves*, concentrates solely on the

novel's male characters.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Francoise Carter overlooks Susan's soliloquies, focussing instead on Bernard's relationship to language.<sup>28</sup> For many, Susan, like Mrs Ramsay, conforms to patriarchal structures, and it is perhaps for this reason that her soliloquies are often omitted from discussion. Malgorzata Myk, for example, writes: 'Jinny questions the social constructions of femininity, whereas Susan finds little reconciliation between her individual freedom and motherhood.'<sup>29</sup> Similarly Chloë Taylor, in a Kristevan reading of the text, argues that 'Susan, who identifies with the maternal, resents language and the manner by which it robs her of those she loves: men and her children as they learn to speak. [...] The language she uses is conventional, not revolutionary or transgressive.'<sup>30</sup> Both of these statements suggest that Susan lacks individuality and creativity. She is read in relation to the men she loves and her children. Although in childhood Susan feels 'tied down with single words' (*TW*, p. 11), and lacks an interest in Bernard's fluent phrases, she is in fact the first of the text's speakers to shift from simple descriptive phrasing to a more complex and comparative use of simile: 'The leaves are gathered round the window like pointed ears' (*TW*, p. 5). Simile, as Hillis Miller highlights, is a conspicuous and self-conscious aspect of Woolf's narrative technique in *The Waves*.<sup>31</sup> Here Susan perceives the leaves as something other than their existence in reality; for her they are not leaves at all, but the ears of an arboreal animal. Susan is the first speaker in the narrative to undermine the mimetic representation of reality in her speeches. Like Lily Briscoe, Susan's creative vision is not descriptive, and she too tends towards visual abstraction: "I see a slab of pale yellow [...] spreading away until it meets a purple stripe." Like her counterpart in *To the Lighthouse*, Susan's

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<sup>27</sup> Jack F. Stewart, 'Existence and Symbol in *The Waves*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 18.3 (1972), 443-447.

<sup>28</sup> Francoise Carter, 'Bernard's Notebooks: Language and Narrative in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*', *English Academy Review*, 19.1 (2002), 82-92.

<sup>29</sup> Malgorzata Myk, "Let Rhoda Speak Again": Identity, Uncertainty, and Authority in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, *Text Matters*, 1.1 (2011), 106-122 (112).

<sup>30</sup> Chloë Taylor, 'Kristevan Themes in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 29.3 (2006), 57-77 (62).

<sup>31</sup> He writes: 'Perhaps the most conspicuous stylistic feature of the soliloquies is [the speakers'] extravagant use of figures of speech. The figures are often similes. [...] "Like" is a key word in *The Waves*.' [J. Hillis Miller, 'The Waves as Exploration of (An)aesthetic Absence', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 83.3 (Summer, 2014), 659-677 (663).]

perception of the garden is underlined by colour and geometric form, and this recalls Lily Briscoe's Post-Impressionist expression of colour and shape upon her canvas. Aside from the first interlude of the text, Susan is the first speaker of the text to use colour in her speeches, and, significantly, this aligns with Woolf's prismatic use of colour in literary form.<sup>32</sup>

While Bernard wishes to communicate with Susan by 'melt[ing] into each other with phrases' (*TW*, p. 10), Susan exposes the solubility of his language, and contrasts this with the material substance of her own: "I see the beetle," said Susan. "It is black, I see; it is green, I see; I am tied down with single words. But you wander off; you slip away; you rise up higher, with words and words in phrases" (*TW*, p. 11). Susan's statement, made in childhood, anticipates Bernard's later dissatisfaction with his 'warm soluble words' (*TW*, p. 53), but it also highlights the intangibility of his language, which slips and wanders from the present moment. Susan's language, here, is underlined by colour, and she does notice the variability of the colour on the beetle which changes in iridescence from black to green. In contrast to Bernard's seeping colours, Susan sees colour in single and distinct units. Like Roger Fry's 'mosaic of vision', the patterning of colour in the observable environment, here Susan's detachment enables her to observe the way in which colours operate distinctly as well as in harmony with others. She sees colour 'as unities apart from their surroundings'.<sup>33</sup> Although her use of language is not as copious as Bernard's, Chloë Taylor's suggestion that Susan is unable to communicate is problematic in that it places a privilege upon linguistic forms of communication rather than visual modes of expression. Susan's use of language in its simplest form draws attention to the visual sense data that language can convey. For her, words are inextricably bound to colour, almost synaesthetically: 'Those are white words [...] like stones one picks up from the seashore' (*TW*, p. 14). In her essay *Walter Sickert: A Conversation*, Woolf suggests that language in its simplest form can achieve the same effects as painting: 'The novelist is always saying to himself,

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<sup>32</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> Fry, *Vision and Design*, p. 37.

How can I bring the sun onto my page? How can I show the night and the moon rising? And he must often think that to describe a scene is the worst way to show it. It must be done with one word in skilful contrast with another' ('WS', p. 43). Her essay also suggests that language in excess results in 'extreme dullness': 'Though talk is a common habit and much enjoyed, those who try to record it are aware that it runs hither and thither, seldom sticks to the point, abounds in exaggeration and inaccuracy, and has frequent stretches of extreme dullness' ('WS', p. 36). Susan's taciturnity is that of the artist; like Sickert, who 'has no need for explanation: green is enough' ('WS', pp. 40-41), Susan's use of language in terms of colour enables her to avoid Bernard's erratic and descriptive use of language. For him language is associated with movement: '[Words] wag their tails; they flick their tails; they move through the air in flocks, now this way, now that way' (*TW*, p. 14). In contrast to his superfluous phrases, Susan's language allows her to convey her experience of reality in terms of perception and visual stimulus.

Although Woolf rarely describes the physical appearance of her characters in her work, in *The Waves* the speakers frequently draw attention to Susan's eyes. Jinny notes that she has 'grass-green eyes which poets will love [...] because they fall close upon white stitching' (*TW*, p. 31); Bernard states that 'Susan [has] eyes like lumps of crystal' (*TW*, p. 92), while Neville notices that her 'eyes are quenched' by the light of the evening (*TW*, p. 186). While the male speakers of the text see her eyes in terms of light reflection and refraction, Jinny draws attention to their green colour and her perception of white stitches. While this statement associates Susan with the domestic art of sewing (an activity she undertakes throughout the narrative), the colours Jinny highlights here are green and white, two of the three colours associated with the suffrage and suffragette movement in the early twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> These colours, as the previous chapter of this thesis demonstrates, underline the colour spectrum of *To the Lighthouse*, but they also provide the colour tonality for *The Waves*. Although Susan's association with green is often read in terms

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<sup>34</sup> See Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 173.

of nature, at school it signifies a potentially feminist visual aesthetic. Of all of the female speakers in the text, Susan is the figure who is most critical of institutionalised education and gendered segregation. Separated from her father, she resents the ‘meretricious’ falsity of school life and education:

My eyes swell; my eyes prick with tears. I hate the smell of pine and linoleum. I hate the wind-bitten shrubs and the sanitary tiles. I hate the cheerful jokes and the glazed look of everyone. [...] Rhoda and Jinny sit far off in brown serge, and look at Miss Lambert who sits under a picture of Queen Alexandra reading from a book before her. There is also a blue scroll of needlework embroidered by some old girl. If I do not purse my lips, if I do not screw my handkerchief, I shall cry. (*TW*, p. 24)

While Susan’s tears betray her unhappiness, her eyes are contrasted with the ‘glazed look’ of the other students who seem to have lost their sense of individuality. Like monks dressed in brown habits, Rhoda and Jinny sit beneath a portrait of the consort of the Edward VII, the ruling imperialist monarch, listening to the lesson supplied to them by their teacher, Miss Lambert.<sup>35</sup> Colour is predominantly absent here, except for the blue scroll of embroidery created by a previous student. In contrast to Susan’s purely white needlework, here the blue material of the student’s work signifies the colour of the British empire. However, the presence of Susan’s handkerchief, a repeated symbol associated with her rage, signifies her challenge to the institutions that seek to regulate her at school. Transposing Susan’s feelings of rage onto a material artefact, Woolf foregrounds the potential political symbolism that can be attached to everyday artefacts.

As her time at school passes, Susan becomes increasingly critical of the regimented practices of the institution. For her, time forms itself into shapes of conformity at the school: ‘each night I tear off the old day from the calendar, and screw it tight into a ball. I do this vindictively, while Betty and Clara are on their knees. I do not pray. I revenge myself upon the day. I wreak my spite upon its image. You are dead now, I say, school day, hated day. They have

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<sup>35</sup> Miss Lambert is not presented as a figure of imperialism. The purple amethyst ring that she wears, as Goldman suggests, is a sign of her sympathy for the suffrage movement. See Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 194.

made all the days of June – this is the twenty-fifth – shiny and orderly’ (*TW*, p. 30). Rather than submitting like the other girls to prayer and conformity, Susan attempts to erase her days at school by tearing them from the calendar, and screwing them into a ball like her handkerchief. Doing so enables her to manipulate the ‘shiny and orderly’ days of June into a compromised shape that better conveys her experience of time. She wreaks ‘spite’ upon the image of obedience that the school upholds. Susan contrasts the orderly progression of time at school with an image of time passing in the corridors of her home in Lincolnshire:

At home the hay waves over the meadows. [...] In the house one door bangs and then another, as the summer air puffs along the empty passages. Some old picture perhaps swings on the wall. A petal drops from the rose in the jar. [...] All this I see, I always see, as I pass the looking-glass on the landing. (*TW*, pp. 30-1)

Susan’s sense of her own absence from her home is reminiscent of the absent centre at the heart of *To the Lighthouse*. Looking into the mirror, she is able to imagine visually the summer’s breeze moving through the ‘empty passages’ of her house, lifting a painting from the wall and dislodging a petal from a rose. Like the breezes in ‘Time Passes,’ which question the material permanence of the wallpaper, asking if the ‘red and yellow roses [...] would fade’ (*TL*, p. 138), here Susan’s home is subject to disintegration and decay. Without her presence, the picture (perhaps her own painting) is unfixed upon the wall, while the rose decays in its vase.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to the ascetic order of school, Susan’s home is for her a source of creativity. Yet, at school she does make ‘images’ as a means of counteracting the regulating forces that stifle her. While waiting amongst the other girls for her turn to play tennis, she makes visual pictures of all the things she hates about school:

We will pitch here in the long grass and pretend to watch Jinny and Clara, Betty and Mavis. But we will not watch them. I hate watching other people play games. I will make images of all the things I hate most and bury them in the ground. This shiny pebble is Madame Carlo, and I will bury her deep because of her fawning and ingratiating manners, because of the sixpence she gave me for keeping my knuckles flat when I played my scales. I buried her sixpence. [...] I would bury the red-brown tiles and the oily portraits of old men – benefactors, founders of the school. (*TW*, p. 33)

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<sup>36</sup> The image of petals falling from a flower in a vase, as discussed earlier in this chapter, influenced Woolf’s conception of *The Waves*. It is also an image that suggest unity and coherence throughout.



Although Susan considers Madame Carlo's encouragement and reward demeaning, her rejection of her methods of piano instruction is based on her hatred of convention and the requirement to maintain form. For Susan, this act represents the imposition of rules that seek to suppress her creativity. In attempt to combat this, she transmutes her feelings of frustration into physical objects, such as the sixpence and the shiny pebble, and then buries them in order to release her anguish. While this reinforces the centrality of material artefacts in the experience and expression of emotion, it also enables Susan to solidify and make present her anger in order to master the forces that regulate her. While Madame Carlo is foregrounded as a figure of excessive control, it is the school's benefactors that she finds most distasteful. Drawing attention to the portraits that hang in the school, Susan highlights the 'oily' paints used in the compositions, and she understands that the materiality of the paintings captures the nature of those they represent. Wishing to dislodge these from their framing, and undermine the sense of order that they impose, Susan's rebellion against these paintings is reminiscent of the suffragette defacement of a Millais portrait of Thomas Carlyle on display in the National Portrait Gallery in 1910. As Goldman notes: "The portrait of the great Victorian patriarch and champion of history as the biography of great men, is unsurprising as the target for feminist anger."<sup>37</sup> Although Susan does not attempt to destroy the portraits of the school's benefactors, she displays the same 'feminist anger' that Goldman makes reference to here; she understands that these 'old men' represent a tradition that is exclusively male, and obtrusively obscures and suppresses the creativity of women.

After her education and time spent at finishing school in Switzerland, Susan returns home to the countryside of Lincolnshire; here she is able to articulate alternative visual images that counteract those imposed upon her at school. This vision is underlined by the eclipse of light and the reintroduction of prismatic colour. While Goldman considers Rhoda a figure of

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<sup>37</sup> Jane Goldman, 'Virginia Woolf and Modernist Aesthetics', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 35-57 (p. 41).

potential feminism in *The Waves*, she situates Susan as a *magna mater*, an ‘earthly feminine figure,’ removed from the social and political spaces of London.<sup>38</sup> However, Goldman’s reading of Woolf’s record of the total solar eclipse in her diary in June 1927, and her essay ‘The Sun and the Fish (1927), provides a framework in which to consider Susan’s experience of the emergence of dawn and the landscape’s changing colours. While the sun (and its light) is ‘traditionally the province of the masculine,’ darkness and the moon which reflects light from the sun is traditionally feminine. Goldman suggests that Woolf’s essay and diary entry provide an alternative to the binary opposition of light and dark. In her diary, Woolf does not draw attention to the re-appearance of solar light, but rather the emergence of new colours that counteract the dominance of the masculine sun. As Goldman describes:

What seems to move Woolf more than the light going out is the re-emergence of the colours [...]. Woolf notably steers clear of religious terminology here and instead favours an artist’s vocabulary – “washed over and repainted”. There is no sense of the mystic or religious destiny; instead Woolf finds communicated in the event a sense of artistic licence to “make it new”, to reconstruct.<sup>39</sup>

Woolf’s eclipse imagery anticipates ‘her closing meditation on the “world seen without a self” in *The Waves*,’ but it also provides the foundation for Susan’s narrative earlier in the text. After the stifling darkness of her time at school, when at home Susan wakes before dawn in order to witness the return of colour to the landscape:

It is still early morning. [...] The day is stark and stiff as a linen shroud. But it will soften; it will warm. 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 [...]. Mine is the heron that stretches its vast wings lazily; and the cow that creaks as it pushes one foot before another munching; and the wild swooping swallow; and the faint red in the sky, and the green when the red fades. (*TW*, p. 76)

In claiming ownership of nature surrounding her home, this passage is reminiscent of Orlando’s experience of the land surrounding him at Knole. However, while Orlando views the land as his own, Susan articulates a lack of distinction between herself and the landscape: she becomes the

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<sup>38</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 194.

<sup>39</sup> Goldman, *ibid.*, p. 36.

heron, the swallow and the colours of the sky. By introducing non-human aspects to her self-definition, Susan decentres the narrative perspective from that of the human subject. As Ryan notes, Susan ‘enter[s] into a zone or territory of proximity or indeterminacy, the shared event of becoming different, of becoming entangled with the other in a de- and then re-making of traditional ontological categories of human and animal.’<sup>40</sup> While this enables her to destabilise the categories of human and animal, it also allows her to reconstruct her sense of self in terms of colour: she is the ‘red in the sky, and the green when the red fades.’

Susan’s perception of the sky is significant if read in the light of Woolf’s eclipse imagery. At first, she sees the sky as a single colour ‘stark and stiff as a linen shroud’. Devoid of colour, Woolf initially associates the moments prior to dawn with death. It is not the darkness that symbolises death, but the linen-white absence of colour in the sky. Inverting the binary opposition between light (life) and darkness (death), a parallel can be drawn between Susan’s imagery and Woolf’s own experience of the eclipse, in which she also associates loss of colour with death: ‘we kept saying this is the shadow; & we thought now it is over – this is the shadow when suddenly the light went out. We had fallen. It was extinct. There was no colour. The earth was dead. ... [The colours] came back astonishingly lightly & quickly and beautifully in the valley & over the hills – at first with a miraculous glittering & aetheriality [*sic.*], later normally almost, but with a great sense of relief. It was like a recovery.’ (*D3*, p. 143). Although, in *The Waves*, Susan does not witness the eclipse of the sun, the emergence of the morning light brings about a similar return of colour to the land: ‘The wood smoke rises. The starkness of the dawn is going out of it. Now the day stirs. Colour returns. The day waves yellow with all its crops’ (*TW*, pp. 76-7). While Woolf, in her diary, considers the return of colour to the landscape a ‘rebirth’, in her characterisation of Susan, she uses the emergence of colour to question the nature of identity:

But who am I, who lean on this gate and watch my setter nose in a circle? I think sometimes (I am not twenty yet) I am not a woman, but the light that falls on this gate,

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<sup>40</sup> Derek Ryan, “‘The Reality of Becoming’: Deleuze, Woolf and the Territory of Cows”, *Deleuze Studies*, 7.4 (2013), 537-561 (539).

on this ground, I am the seasons I think sometimes, January, May, November[.] (*TW*, p. 77).

In both her diary and *The Waves*, the presence of red setters draws a parallel between the fictional and biographical instances. In her diary, she writes: 'Four great red setters came leaping over the moor. [...] Then, for a moment we saw the sun, sweeping – it seemed to be sailing at a great pace [...] we saw it crescent, burning red. [...] the setters were racing round; everyone was standing in long lines, rather dignified, looking out. I thought how we were like very old people, in the birth of the world[.]' (*D3*, p. 143). While there is a sense here of a dissolution of selfhood in Susan's mergence with the land, the light and the seasons, the parallel Woolf draws between Susan and light enables her to re-write the solar imagery of the eclipse, which, as Goldman highlights, has been characterised throughout history as distinctly male.

At this point in the text, Susan occupies the position of the sun-goddess who is present in several of the text's interludes, most notably in the very first: '*[S]he raised her lamp higher and the air seemed to become fibrous and to tear away from the green surface flickering and flaming in red and yellow fibres [...]. Slowly the arm that raised the lamp raised it higher and higher until a broad flame became visible; an arc of fire burnt on the rim of the horizon, and all round it the sea blazed gold*' (emphasis in original) (*TW*, pp. 3-4). Both Susan and the nameless figure of the interludes become representations of light, but their engagement with colour is also similarly presented. While the omniscient narrator of the interlude draws attention to the gold colour that the sun leaves upon the surface of the water, Susan similarly takes note of the relationship between light and colour: 'The clouds, warm now, sun-spotted, sweep over the hills, leaving gold in the water, and gold on the necks of swans.' (*TW*, p. 78). Susan understands that light is the facilitator of colour, but what follows is an instance in which Woolf's imagery is somewhat difficult to interpret:

Pushing one foot before the other, the cows munch their way across the field. I feel through the grass for the white-domed mushroom; and break its stalk and pick the purple orchid that grows beside it and lay the orchid and the mushroom with the earth at its root, and so home to make the kettle boil for my father among the just reddened roses on the tea-table. (*TW*, p. 78)

Following her contemplation of the nature of her identity, Susan's attention turns to the image of an orchid and a mushroom, a flower and fungi that are not commonly associated with each other. What is significant, however, is Susan's arrangement of the plants and their colour. Laying them upon the floor with the earth still present at the root, the plants anticipate Rhoda's bitter offering of 'blackened violets' at the death of Percival, a figure of imperialism and the text's 'solar hero': '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, torn up by the roots from the pavement of Oxford Street, my penny bunch, my penny bunch of violets' (*TW*, p. 129). There is a parallel here between the rural location of Susan's home and the urban space of London that Rhoda inhabits; Rhoda recalls the cows that Susan walks amongst, and Woolf draws a connection between two moments in the text divided by a significant passage of time. Both female figures use purple flowers as a symbol of potential feminist imagism. While Rhoda relinquishes her offering into the waters of the Thames, Susan abandons her purple flowers upon the grass and returns to the domestic spaces of her father's house. Here upon the tea-table are 'just reddened roses' (*TW*, p. 78), imperialist in colour, acting as a signifier of her entry into the patriarchal structures of the familial home.

While in childhood and early adulthood, Susan displays a tendency to critique imperialist structures, she soon submits to the institution of marriage. Like Mrs Ramsay, who is barred from an engagement with the visual arts due to the demands of her husband and children, Susan's relationship with colour changes as the text progresses. While Woolf's use of the purple and white in association with Susan early in the text demonstrates a potential for feminism, the meaning attached to the colour purple changes as Susan contemplates her future as a mother at the first dinner scene of the novel:

I shall never have anything but natural happiness. It will almost content me. I shall go to bed tired. I shall lie like a field bearing crops in rotation; in the summer heat will dance over me; in the winter I shall be cracked by the cold. [...] I shall possess more than Jinny, more than Rhoda, by the time I die. But on the other hand, where you are various and dimple a million times to the ideas and laughter of others, I shall be sullen, storm-tined

and all one purple. I shall be debased and hide-bound by the bestial and beautiful passion of maternity. I shall push the fortunes of my children unscrupulously. I shall hate those who see their faults. I shall lie basely to help them. I shall let them wall me away from you[.] (*TW*, pp. 103-04)

Comparing herself to a field bearing crops, Susan's definition of motherhood is characterised by production. Here, she becomes complicit in a culture that relies upon women to guarantee the stability of the British empire; as Jane Garrity notes: 'If Susan is, by virtue of her reproductive function, both body and land, she is also a space that has been colonized by an imperial masculinity. Like a British map whose places of conquest have been coloured in with shades of red, Susan is a woman whose body has been marked as imperial territory.'<sup>41</sup> While she displays an animalistic maternal instinct in her desire to protect her children, and seems to take pleasure in the 'beautiful passion of maternity', Susan's possessiveness is often considered a sign of her imperialist sympathy. Bradshaw, for example, argues that Susan's 'revelling in the baleful insularity of home and family, is deeply imperialistic in her petty, parochial competitiveness[.]'<sup>42</sup> Although her possessiveness is a sign of loyalty to her own familial situation, she aims to hoard material artefacts as a means of competing with the other female characters of the text, of whom she is jealous. Susan 'protect[s] her soul against' Jinny, because she feels 'her derision steal round me, feels her laughter curl its tongues of fire round me and light up unsparingly my shabby-dress, my square-tipped fingernails, which I at once hide under the table-cloth' (*TW*, p. 95). Claiming ownership of material objects is a defence mechanism that enables Susan to avoid comparison with Jinny who 'brings things to a point, to order': 'She seems to centre everything; round her tables, lines of doors, windows, ceilings, ray themselves, like rays round the star in the middle of a smashes window pane' (*TW*, p. 95). Susan notes the ease with which Rhoda and Jinny respond to the 'ideas and laughter of others', while she remains 'sullen, storm-tinted and all one purple.'

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<sup>41</sup> Jane Garrity, *Step-daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 261.

<sup>42</sup> Bradshaw, 'Beneath *The Waves*: Diffusionism and Cultural Pessimism', *Essays in Criticism*, 63.1 (2013), 317-43 (333).

While Woolf initially characterised the colour purple as a signifier of Susan's visual creativity, at this point in the text it becomes a symbol of her silence and rejection of the impositions of language. For her, 'talking' is like the 'undressing [of] an old woman whose dress had seemed to be a part of her, [...] When you are silent you are again beautiful' (*TW*, p. 103). Here, Susan argues that language is invasive, particularly for women: it removes the material coverings (here the woman's clothing) that protect the self from the prying language of others. In response to this, Susan characterises herself 'as all one purple', a single pigmented colour, as a means to shield herself from the interrogations she receives from her friends. Like the artists in *Walter Sickert: A Conversation*, Susan prefers silence to conversation. In defining Susan in terms of a single colour, Woolf positions Susan in the 'silent realm' of the visual artist. But while Woolf characterises the visual artist's silence in enigmatic terms, Susan's silence results in her submission to the patriarchal order, and soon her purple is replaced by the blue of imperialism: 'I shall be silent like my mother, silent in a blue apron locking up the cupboards' (*TW*, p. 77). Although Woolf's characterisation of Susan enacts the suppression or quietening of a potential feminism through traditional marriage and motherhood, Susan's association with colour enables us to read Woolf's literary mosaicking, her repetition of colours and visual images (Susan's handkerchief and the purple orchid, for example) as central to her feminist imagery.

### **Red and blue just hidden**

While Susan, in childhood and early adulthood, identifies with feminist visual signifiers (the colours purple and white in particular), Jinny is often considered a problematic figure because she continually searches for sexual validation from men. Her 'transgressive' heterosexuality, according to David Bradshaw, would have 'raise[d] readerly eyebrows' for Woolf's contemporary readers:

As she saunters around central London [Jinny] is not only slavishly responsive to male approval but peculiarly keen to excite it. So eager, in fact, that it seems quite likely that Jinny may well be some kind of high-end streetwalker as well as an avid streetwalker. She does after all, hang around Piccadilly Circus Underground, and that, both in Woolf's

writings and the real-world London of her day, should be enough in itself to raise readerly eyebrows.<sup>43</sup>

For Bradshaw, Jinny's engagement with the city spaces of London signifies her participation in a culture that positions the female body as a product for male consumption, and her close connection with consumer culture, with cosmetics and clothing, suggests her willingness to take part in this exchange. Yet the all too frequent reading of Jinny as 'slavishly responsive to male approval', undermines her own participation in sexual exchanges, privileging that of her male companions. It also overlooks the approvals and rejections she bestows in her own right. As she demonstrates at the first party-scene in the novel: 'I am rooted, but I flow. All gold, flowing that way, I say to this one, "Come". Rippling black, I say to that one, "No". One breaks off from his station under the glass cabinet. [...] Pale, with dark hair, the one who is coming is melancholy, romantic. And I am arch and fluent and capricious[.]' (*TW*, p. 80). Jinny's behaviour here is far from submissive. Although, throughout the text she engages with her environment through the medium of her body (she states: 'my imagination is the body's. I can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by my body' [*TW*, p. 101]), she displays an awareness of its ability to communicate in both verbal and visual terms. Like Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject, Woolf acknowledges that Jinny's subjectivity is in a state of constant flux (flowing, but always rooted), that her subjecthood is 'performative'.<sup>44</sup> But, Woolf does also foreground Jinny's willingness to participate in the culture of sexual exchange. Jinny's language, her expression of self, always operates within a phallogocentric discourse that defines her as an object of male desire. Woolf's use of the term 'fluent', here, however, suggests a sense of self-assured confidence in her fluency of communication. While Susan is defined as 'all one purple', in this soliloquy Jinny signals to her surroundings in various colours and is able to read and interpret her environment visually. But, unlike Lily Briscoe's prismatic colour vision, this does not suggest a willingness to undermine the

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<sup>43</sup> David Bradshaw, 'Introduction', in *The Waves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. xi-xxxix (p. xxiv).

<sup>44</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 6.



patriarchal chiaroscuro of light and shade. Rather Jinny's association with colour, the colours of her clothing and material possessions, as well as the expression of her experience in colour terms, suggest an identification with the visual signifiers of British imperialism and capitalist exchange.

Like Susan, in childhood Jinny is aware of the visual sense data that language can convey. But, while Susan is 'tied down' with words and phrases and feels unable to communicate with Bernard, Jinny understands that language is a material substance that underlines everyday conversation. At the first party scene, words materialise in the empty space between herself and her interlocutor:

Words crowd and cluster and push forth one on top of another. It does not matter which. They jostle and mount on each other's shoulders. The single and solitary mate, tumble and become many. It does not matter what I say. Crowding, like a fluttering bird, one sentence crosses the empty space between us. It settles on his lips. I fill my glass again. I drink. The veils drop between us. (*TW*, p. 81).

Here words cluster like the crowds of people that occupy the urban spaces of London, and Jinny's language is also associated with consumption; like wine, she drinks the words of her companion, but she also understands that language creates a veil between them. In her work on Virginia Woolf and clothing, Koppen draws attention to the image of the veil in *The Waves*, suggesting that Woolf uses this image to signify both a connection with and a distinction from reality:

*The Waves* gives us clothing's material shaping of individuals through habit or *habitus*; the ideological and ideational effects of the material world, but also the human attempt at shaping the material world through types of figuration, interpretation and investment. Fashion figures modern metropolitan experience [...], while webs, nets, filaments signify depth of being and transindividual, transhistorical connections; yielding veils, sheets and curtains separating one world from another, draperies enveloping in ambiguity.<sup>45</sup>

Clothing, as Koppen suggests, is a visual signifier, and it offers the subject a means of expressing the self in the material world.<sup>46</sup> In its covering of the body, the way it shapes itself around the

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<sup>45</sup> Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*, p. 149. (emphasis in original)

<sup>46</sup> Although in *Orlando* Woolf considers the way in which clothing operates to regulate the gendered-subject, in *The Waves* clothing is used as a means to visually express creativity, particularly in Woolf's characterisation of Jinny. When *Orlando* returns to England as a woman she notices the effect of clothing on her behaviour:

subject's body, clothing provides a material interaction between the subject and the palpable environment. But it is not solely restricted to the expression of a single identity; as Koppen suggests the materiality of clothing signifies 'connection' in its web-like textures of filaments and nets. Like Woolf's conceptualisation of language and textuality as an integument, a 'semi-transparent envelope' and the patterns of ordinary experience ('MF', p. 9),<sup>47</sup> here clothing offers another means through which we can read individuality and identification.

Unlike Rhoda, whose engagement with consumerism exposes her dissatisfaction with imperialist culture, in middle-age Jinny relishes the position she occupies within British 'civilisation'. As Garrity notes: '*The Waves* conveys both the seductiveness and the cost of the imperialist narrative to women's psyches.'<sup>48</sup> Considering herself 'no longer young' (*TW*, p. 154), Jinny enters the city spaces of London in order to re-connect with people and to become part of the 'triumphant procession':

But now I swear, making deliberately in front of the glass those slight preparations that equip me, I will not be afraid. Think of the superb omnibuses, red and yellow, stopping and starting, punctually in order. [...] This is the triumphant procession; this is the army of victory with banners and brass eagles and heads crowned with laurel-leaves won in battle. They are better than savages in loin-cloths, and women whose hair is dank [...]. These broad thoroughfares [...] are sanded paths of victory driven through the jungle. I too, with my little patent-leather shoes, my handkerchief that is but a film of gauze, my reddened lips and my finely pencilled eyebrows, march to victory with the band. (*TW*. p. 155)

In this passage, Woolf closely aligns the imperialist trajectory of Percival with Jinny's consumption of clothing and cosmetics. At this point in the text, Jinny fears that her body is no longer able to perform its function within the imperialist machine, and she believes that she is no longer the object of male desire; she has become a 'whimpering animal' (*TW*, p. 154); 'trembling [and] palpitating' as she notices her reflection in a shop window, she feels: 'I [must] always

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'Orlando bought herself a complete outfit of such clothes as women then wore [...]. It is a strange fact, but a true one, that up to this moment she had scarcely given her sex a thought. Perhaps the Turkish trousers which she had hitherto worn had done something to distract her thoughts [...]. At any rate, it was not until she felt the coil of skirts about her legs, and the Captain offered, with the greatest politeness, to have an awning spread for her on deck, that she realized with a start the penalties and privileges of her position.' (*O*, p. 147)

<sup>47</sup> For more on this see the introduction to the thesis.

<sup>48</sup> Jane Garrity, *Step-daughters of England*, p. 244.

prepare myself for the sight of myself' (*TW*, p. 154). In the passage above, Woolf contrasts the 'savages in loin-cloths' and 'women with dank hair', with Jinny's 'reddened lips' and 'pencilled eyebrows', and in doing so exaggerates the superficiality of British 'civilisation', which has the potential to deteriorate. While the passage recalls Susan's handkerchief, which becomes a signifier of her rage, here Woolf's description of Jinny's, which is made of a film-like gauze, suggests a sense of intangibility in the material signifiers of privilege. But it also suggests, what Koppen describes as, a 'transindividual/transhistorical' connection between Jinny and the subjects exploited by British imperialism. Woolf characterises both Jinny, and the supposed 'savages' of 'subaltern' cultures in animalistic terms, and in doing so undermines the distinction between Jinny and individuals subjected to imperialist rule. The thinness of the handkerchief here also signals the potential for the material markers of Jinny's privilege to deteriorate.

Woolf's literary mosaicking, her identification of various colours with differing characters, enables her to signify the political circumstances of this moment in time, and how these political viewpoints can be expressed covertly through colour. But rather than use colour solely as a visual expression of subjective experience, Woolf interlaces colour with material artefacts, particularly the clothing and fabrics that adorn the figures of the text. While Vanessa Bell describes her painting process in terms of the mosaic, she also uses the image of 'wool-work' to convey the way she draws together and arranges disparate colours in a single composition. Similarly, Woolf's use of colour draws together differing (often politicised) perspectives in *The Waves*, but her attention to its manifestation in material garments demonstrates its significance in the expression of selfhood. The material fabric of Jinny's society in the passage above is used by Woolf as a means to undermine the notion of a dominant Western civilisation. Just as she mocked Orlando's forefathers who 'came out of the northern mists with coronets on their heads' (*O*, p. 14), their banners, brass eagles and laurel-leaves are also positioned as an unnecessary adornment, and a marker of wealth and status. While Susan's association with the colours purple and white earlier in the text bring to mind the visual signifiers

of the suffrage movement, here Jinny's vision of a collective procession is conveyed in imperialist colours. In 'civilised' London, she perceives the reds and yellows of omnibuses, which mirror the colours of the clothing she wears throughout the text. For Jinny a yellow and red silk scarf is one of her recurring material markers. Like the 'yellow' and 'fiery' words she perceives in childhood, Jinny understands that the colours are a mode of communication:

'For now my body, my companion, which is always sending its signals, the rough black "No", the golden "Come", in rapid running arrows of sensation, beckons. Someone moves. Did I raise my arm? Did I look? Did my yellow scarf with the strawberry spots float and signal? He has broken from the wall. He follows. I am pursued through the forest. All is rapt, all is nocturnal, and the parrots go screaming through the branches. [...] We are out of doors. Night opens; night traversed by wandering moths [...]. I smell roses; I smell violets; I see red and blue just hidden. (*TW*, p. 141)

Language, colour and the material world (here in the form of clothing) are closely intertwined. Jinny's rejection and acceptance of her sexual partners is conveyed here in terms of colour, which, Woolf suggests, are signified by the movement and sensations of her body. Just as Lily Briscoe displays an awareness of the physical sensations of colour, in this text Jinny is also aware of the 'running arrows' of colour sensation. Like *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves* also draws attention to the sense data that colour can convey; here the coldness of Jinny's rejection is signified in black, while her acceptance is signified ostentatiously in gold.

Lily Briscoe uses plastic colour to communicate her visual creativity, but Jinny's body is her only means of signification: '[M]y imagination is the body's. I can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by my body. My body goes before me, like a lantern down a dark lane, bringing one thing after another out of darkness into a ring of light. I dazzle you; I make you believe this is all' (*TW*, p. 101). The text characterises Jinny's body in visual terms, and her expression of creativity is regulated by patriarchal narratives. Here Jinny arrogantly characterises herself in terms of chiaroscuro; she is a light, but she also upholds the patriarchal light of enlightenment. At this point in the narrative she becomes, what Garrity describes as, 'a mirror for nationalist propaganda'; Jinny 'embodies an "imperialist femininity"' that is complicit with the 'ideological

structures of empire.<sup>49</sup> As she leaves the party with her lover in the passage above, Jinny's soliloquy draws attention to the reds and blues that are 'just hidden'. While at first the reference to colour here is somewhat ambiguous, if read in the wider context of Woolf's literary mosaicking technique, her use of colour signifies the complex political narratives that operate in society. Jinny's observation of the red and blue colours of imperialism at this point in the narrative demonstrate Woolf's acknowledgement of the patriarchal structures that govern Jinny's sexual transactions in the context of upper-middle class British society.

Woolf's characterisation of Jinny exposes alternative modes of visual creativity that can be generated by an engagement with the material world, but she also demonstrates the restrictions of Jinny's world vision. The text reveals that Jinny is adept at reading the 'hieroglyphs written on other people's faces' (*TW*, p. 140), yet the fictions she creates about the lives of the party attendants is problematic: '[T]hat man is a judge; and that man is a millionaire, and that man, with the eyeglass, shot his governess through the heart with an arrow when he was ten years old. [...] That woman, you whisper discreetly, with the pear pagodas hanging from her ears, was the pure flame who lit the life of one of our statesmen[.]' (*TW*, p. 139). Jinny's reading of the hieroglyphs of her society enable Woolf to converge the interpretation of word and image in her work. The hieroglyph, as a pictorial language, occupies a space between language and visual signification, which fits with Woolf's ongoing discussion about ways of reading visual and verbal modes of communication. In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf undermines the distinction between word and image in her representation of colour in Lily's painting, and in *The Waves* she suggests that visual markers in the observed environment can also be read like a language. Jinny's interpretation of the visual hieroglyphs, however, expose her mirroring of patriarchal narratives; she focuses on the professions, financial status, and violent actions of men, and reads the woman in terms of sexual exchange. Reflective of the fiery imagery that Woolf associates with Jinny, this

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<sup>49</sup> Garrity, *Step-daughters of England*, p. 245. Garrity suggest that all three of the women in the text become mirrors for nationalist propaganda; however, my reading of Susan and Rhoda diverges somewhat from this argument.

unnamed woman also occupies her position within an imperialist narrative prescribed to women as the object of male desire.

Jinny's narrative offers no critique of the workings of her culture, and its exploitation of its subjects. As she sits conversing 'under the cut flowers, on the sofa by the picture', she 'decorates' her 'Christmas tree with facts and again with facts': 'One must be quick and add facts deftly, like toys to [the] tree' (*TW*, pp. 138-39). In the novel, the image of the Christmas tree is closely associated with imperialism. In childhood, Louis (the text's only colonial subject) is presented with a British flag that once adorned a Christmas tree.<sup>50</sup> Jinny's decoration of the other party attendants with fictional facts is encapsulated in the same visual image, but here it is extended further in her understanding of the workings of society:

In one way or another we make this day, this Friday, some by going to the Law Courts; others to the city; others to the nursery; others by marching and forming fours. A million hands stitch, raise hods with bricks. The activity is endless. And to-morrow we make Saturday. Some take train for France; others ship for India. Some will never come into this room again. One may die to-night. [...] From us every sort of building, policy, venture, picture, poem, child, factory will spring. Life comes; life goes. We make life. (*TW*, p. 140)

Anticipating her identification with the crowds in the city spaces of London, here Jinny feels part of a wider collective project that creates the present moment. Reflective of Woolf's overall mosaic design, which brings together varying perspectives in a single narrative, Jinny conceptualises her society and the people who function to create that society in similar terms of unification. While her use of the collective pronouns 'we' and 'us' reveal an identification with the people who 'make life', Woolf ironically positions Jinny and her companion as an observer of this creativity as they passively enjoy the privileges of London society. Amongst the buildings, factories and policies listed here are pictures and poems, which suggests that Jinny understands art in terms of industry and commerce. Just as she reads the visual markers of clothing as a signifier of wealth and status, for her pictures and poems are part of the cultural capital.

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<sup>50</sup> '[W]e danced round the Christmas tree and handing the parcels they forgot me, and the fat woman said, "This little boy has no present", and gave me a shiny Union Jack from the top of the tree, and I cried with fury – to be remembered with pity' (*TW*, p. 26).

While Jinny engages with colour through her clothing, throughout the text she shuns an engagement with other material art forms, which suggests her embeddedness in capitalist consumerism rather than aesthetics. This can most clearly be observed while she is a girl at school. In one of her shortest soliloquies, articulated at school, Jinny contrasts the fiery imagism of her self-definition with that of her school-mistress, Miss Lambert: 'I should like a thin dress shot with red threads that would gleam in the firelight. [...] But Miss Lambert wears an opaque dress, that falls in a cascade from her snow-white ruffle as she sits under a picture of Queen Alexandra pressing one white finger firmly on the page' (*TW*, p. 25). Although the severity of Miss Lambert's presence here points towards authoritarian rule, her association with the colour white suggests an identification with the suffrage movement. Goldman suggests that Rhoda notices Miss Lambert's potentially feminist visual signifiers: 'Rhoda's vision of Miss Lambert may be considered as an alternative to [a] masculine vision of subjectivity.'<sup>51</sup> Jinny's soliloquies, however, also draw attention to the colours purple and white, particularly in relation to the printed page. There is a shared image in Rhoda's soliloquy and Jinny's in the act of reading at school. Both girls note Miss Lambert's white finger upon the printed page; while Jinny notes the whiteness of her hand, Rhoda draws attention to the purple amethyst ring her teacher is wearing: 'The purple light [...] in Miss Lambert's ring passes to and fro across the black stain on the white page of the Prayer Book. It is a vinous, it is an amorous light' (*TW*, p. 24). The colour purple here undermines the monochromatic colouration of the printed page. As Jinny reads at school, she also notes 'a purple rim [that] runs round the black edge of the textbook'. Yet, she also draws attention to her inability to concentrate on language: 'I cannot follow any word through its changes. I cannot follow any thought from past to present' (*TW*, p. 32). Rhoda's vision of Miss Lambert demonstrates her admiration for her.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, Jinny attempts to define herself in

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<sup>51</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 194.

<sup>52</sup> Rhoda also characterises Miss Lambert in terms of a Greek statue: 'All is solemn, all is pale where she stands, like a statue in a grove. She lets her tasselled silken cloak slip down, and only her purple ring still glows, her vinous, her amethystine ring' (*TW*, p. 34).

opposition to the suffrage colourism of Miss Lambert. Remembering this image in early adulthood, Jinny recalls ‘monumental ladies, white-ruffed, stone-coloured, enigmatic, with amethyst rings moving like virginal tapers, dim-glowworms [*sic.*] over the pages’ (*TW*, p. 98).

Although Rhoda is inspired by the colour, Jinny perceives the colour as dull, which demonstrates her unwillingness to challenge the language of imperialism.

Later in the text, as she enters London society, Jinny draws attention to, but resists, the colourism of the suffrage movement. She finds it strange that some women ‘should put out the lights and go upstairs. They have taken off their dresses, they have put on white night-gowns’ (*TW*, p. 78). Unwilling to take part in the transaction of sexual exchange, these women seemingly pose a challenge to her world of party-going. Woolf’s use of the colour white as a symbol of resistance is incorporated into her characterisation of Rhoda, who despises being ‘drowned in light’ and ‘trapped in silk’ at the party (*TW*, p. 83). In order to escape her debilitating party-consciousness, Rhoda looks through the curtained window of her hostess’s rooms at the ‘sudden effulgence of moon,’ and compares herself to the foam from the waves ‘that sweeps and fills the uttermost rims of the rocks with whiteness’ (*TW*, p. 84). Although Rhoda’s comparison of herself to sea foam suggests a sense of self-dissolution, the fact that the rocks are stained white recalls the impression of purple light on the textbooks at her school.<sup>53</sup> Jinny also notes the suffrage colours that are present within the room of the first party scene: ‘Here are gilt chairs in the empty, the expectant rooms, and flowers, stiller, statelier than flowers that grow, spread green, spread white against the walls. And on the small table is one bound book’ (*TW*, pp. 79-80). While Susan finds potentially feminist imagery in the flowers that grow wild in Lincolnshire, Jinny prefers cultivated, cut flowers perfectly arranged in her hostess’s rooms. Yet the images of

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<sup>53</sup> This passage also establishes Rhoda’s association with the Greek goddess of the moon, Diana. On several occasions within the text, Bernard describes her as the ‘nymph of the fountain always wet’ (*W*, p. 92), which echoes the story of Arethusa in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. For more on this see Susan Sellers and Michael Herbert, ‘Explanatory notes’, in *The Waves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 321. Also for a more detailed discussion of Rhoda’s association with the colour white, see Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, pp. 191-98.



these flowers spreading white and green against the wall reinforces Woolf's suffrage colourism, which is submerged within the text. That attention should also be drawn to a 'bound book' is also significant, and there are two instances in the novel in which the bindings of books are noticed by Jinny. The second takes place later in the text, as she prepares her own house for the arrival of guests: 'I will fill the vases with lavish, with luxurious, with extravagant flowers nodding in green bunches. I will place one chair there, another here [...] and some gaily covered new unread book in case Bernard comes, or Neville or Louis' (*TW*, p. 156). Here Jinny imitates her hostess in her arrangement of lavish cut flowers, but her positioning of an unread book upon the table for her male guests to read demonstrates her superficial engagement with art and culture. While we can assume that Jinny purchased the book, she neither reads it or expresses an interest in the new unread work of fiction. Throughout the text, then, Woolf enacts Jinny's disregard for art, and this suggests a fissure between her role in imperialist exchange and the expression of creativity in material and literary form.

Jinny does, however, display an awareness of the political uses of art and literature.

Shortly before she returns to her house to decorates for her guests, she enters a tube station and notices how the visual markers of culture are displayed even underground:

Look how they show off clothes here even in the underground. They will not let the earth lie wormy and sodden. There are gauzes and silks illumined in glass cases and underclothes trimmed with a million close stitches of fine embroidery. Crimson, green, violet, they are dyed all colours. Think how they organise, roll out, smooth dip in dyes, and drive tunnels blasting the rock. (*TW*, p. 155)

While this passage exposes the inescapability of consumer culture, the fact that suffrage colours of 'green' and 'violet' are drawn attention to in the underground suggests that these visual markers are eclipsed by the dominant narratives of capitalism that operate on the surfaces of the London streets. Jinny's engagement with the underground spaces of the tube station also demonstrates her awareness of this political 'subculture,' but she resists its influence as she leaves the tube station and returns to the open spaces of London: 'How could I run for shelter [...] pause and scrawl with a free hand a joke upon the wall?' (*TW*, p. 156). Uncomfortable in the

obscure(d) spaces of the tube, she willingly takes part in the procession of people in the public spaces of London. Woolf draws her readers' attention to graffiti inscribed upon the wall, but frustratingly refrains from revealing its message. Perhaps, like Lily Briscoe's painting, the inscription poses a challenge to the overarching narratives of British society. As she leaves the tube, Jinny's own colourism undermines these alternative expressions of creativity by reintroducing the red colours of imperialism within her narrative: 'I will powder my face and redden my lips. I will make the angle of my brow sharper than usual. [...] I will stand erect with the others in Piccadilly Circus [...] I still feel the bowing of men in the street like the silent stoop of the corn when the light wind blows, ruffling it red' (*TW*, p. 156). Jinny's self-fashioning and her use of red imperialist imagery signifies her resistance towards political challenges to the visual signifiers of patriarchy.

While Jinny's reading of her environment is problematic in that it upholds a patriarchal, imperialist narrative, her own articulations do acknowledge the limitations of her way of seeing, and Woolf demonstrates this in terms of her experience of colour. After her commentary on the workings of her society, Jinny states: 'But we who live in the body see with the body's imagination things in outline. I see rocks in bright sunshine. I cannot take these facts into some cave and, shading my eyes, grade their yellows, blues, umbers into one substance' (*TW*, p. 140). Unable to engage with the subtleties of various colours, Jinny's vision is superficial; she sees things in outline, and fails to engage with the nuances of self-expression. She makes fictional narratives for the people in her life, but fails to fully understand the composition of her society: 'I cannot tell you if life is this or that. I am going to push forward into the heterogeneous crowd' (*TW*, pp. 140-41). Like Susan, who fails to define herself outside of the life prescribed to her (she is 'all one purple'), Jinny, similarly, is defined by her relation to a single imperialist colour. It is, however, through the figure of Rhoda that Woolf critiques the homogeneity of the visual expression of the self: 'All were dressed in indeterminate shades of grey and brown, never even a blue feather pinned to a hat. None had the courage to be one thing rather than another' (*TW*, p.

163). Woolf's use of colours and imagistic iconography, therefore, enables her to weave a feminist visual aesthetic into her supposedly apolitical text.

Throughout *The Waves*, Woolf uses her female characters to demonstrate how visual and material signifiers enforce political messages that operate within and against the imperialist narratives of British culture and society. Woolf's textual colourism offers new ways of reading the soliloquies that structure the novel. Influenced by Vanessa Bell's colour mosaicking in paint, the way she uses colour demonstrates her attempt to expose how societal regulations penetrate the very fabric of British culture. In examining Susan's early articulations, we can see that her colour perception in nature influences creative expressions that function in opposition to the regulatory forces she experiences at school (her purple flower imagery, for example, works in opposition to the black oily portraits of male benefactors). Through her characterisation of Jinny, Woolf draws attention to the way the colours of British imperialism are embedded in cultural transactions. Colour is often associated with material objects in the text, and these appear and reappear throughout the narrative. This achieves the effect of patterning in her text, not unlike Bell's pointillist technique upon her canvas. By reading Woolf's colourism in this text, it positions *The Waves* as a text embedded in the political circumstances of everyday materialism.

## Conclusion:

### The words might have been written by Anon

From the establishment of the Hogarth Press in 1917 to 1938, the year in which she sold her share of the company, Woolf consciously used her publishing company to promote and circulate the work of women writers, who were often marginalised by larger, commercial publishing houses.<sup>1</sup> As Ursula McTaggart notes, the Hogarth Press prefigured Woolf's 'Outsiders' Society' in *Three Guineas* (1938). This was, as McTaggart describes,

Woolf's imagined means of piecing together a multiplicity of private actions to exert political influence, and though the organization never came to life, the Hogarth Press both prefigured and arguably influenced Woolf's vision of this political strategy by challenging both male-dominated literary history and nationalistic patriarchy.<sup>2</sup>

Given this fact, it seems odd that in her late essay 'Anon' (1941), Woolf would describe the printing press as the machine responsible for the silencing of women throughout literary history. In the unfinished essay, she positions the literary industry as the driving force for women, and other individuals characterised as 'civic outsiders',<sup>3</sup> to be excluded from the narratives of history.

Woolf writes:

Caxton's printing press foretold the end of that anonymous world. It is now written down; fixed; nothing will be added; [...]. The printing press brought the past into existence. It brought into existence the man who is conscious of the past, the man who sees his time against a background of the past; the man who first sees himself and shows himself to us. The first blow has been aimed at Anon when the author's name is attached to the book. The individual emerges. ('A', pp. 584-85)

The 'anonymous world' that Woolf describes here is a world in which there are no distinctions of gender or nationality, where '[s]elf-consciousness had not yet raised its mirror' ('A', p. 584).

Looking back to the oral tradition before the age of print, in 'Anon' Woolf emphasises the participatory nature of literary art: 'Every body [*sic.*] shared in Anon's song, and supplied the

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<sup>1</sup> In April 1938, John Lehmann purchased a partnership in the Press, becoming co-owner with Leonard Woolf. For more on this see J. H. Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers*, pp. 329-360.

<sup>2</sup> Ursula McTaggart, "'Opening the Door": The Hogarth Press as Virginia Woolf's Outsiders' Society', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 29.1 (Spring 2010), 63-81 (63).

<sup>3</sup> Erica Johnson, 'Giving up the Ghost: National and Literary Identity in *Orlando*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50.1 (Spring 2004), 110-128 (118).

story. [...] Anon is sometimes man; sometimes woman. He is the common voice singing out of doors' ('A', pp. 581-82). In the un-individuated moments before the printing press, Anon's song 'breaks the silence of the forest', the only voice singing in the 'silent centuries before the book was printed' ('A', p. 581; p. 583). Like the 'Outsiders' Society', Anon is also characterised as an outcast, with a tendency to criticise political ideologies: 'He used the outsider's privilege to mock the solemn, to comment upon the established. The church men hated the anonymous singer' ('A', p. 582). Anon, therefore, epitomises those who are excluded from cultural narratives: 'He had no name; he had no place' ('A', p. 582). Woolf's depiction of the 'anonymous world' also converses with her concept of androgyny described in *A Room of One's Own*: Anon is both man and woman and can fluctuate between the two. Although Woolf herself uses the male pronoun to define 'Anon', it is only the advent of print that demarcates him as a man: 'It was the printing press that finally was to kill Anon. But it was also the press that preserved him. When in 1477 Caxton printed the twenty one [*sic.*] books of the *Morte D'Arthur* he fixed the voice of Anon for ever' ('A', p. 583). Here, the voice of Anon merges with the various male writers who have their names printed on the covers of their work: 'The individual emerges' ('A', pp. 284-85).

Transitioning from the genderless and inclusive oral tradition (which is often, even today, characterised as female)<sup>4</sup> to the self-proclaiming age of print, it is the female aspect of 'Anon' that suffers exclusion from literary history. With the printing press fixing history into a definitive narrative, Woolf suggests s/he can no longer oscillate between female and male states of being. Through writing and recording history, the male aspect of Anon's identity is solidified in the narratives that shape the present. Printing 'brought into existence the man who is conscious of the past [...] the man who first sees himself and shows himself to us' ('A', p. 584). In this essay, then, Woolf reinforces how the assertion of the male individual on the pages of the literary work excludes those defined as 'other' from the dominant literary tradition.

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<sup>4</sup> For a further discussion of this see Fiona McNeill, 'Free and Bound Maids: Women's Work Songs and Industrial Change in the Age of Shakespeare', in *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Karen Bamford (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 101-15.

If read in conjunction with her declaration in *A Room of One's Own*, that 'anonymous was a woman', the late essay can be read as part of Woolf's feminist trajectory to retrace the lost voices of female writers and establish a new and inclusive literary tradition. In the context of both 'Anon' and *A Room of One's Own*, she associates women with the oral tradition rather than print:

I would venture a 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, on the length of a winter's night. (*Room*, p. 63)

Woolf also continues to note that the articulations of women 'certainly never got [...] onto paper' (*Room*, p. 63). Literary materiality in both *A Room of One's Own* and 'Anon' is the reserve of men. Print culture, Woolf suggests, relegated women to the 'anonymous world' outside the material spaces of print. In the essay, however, Woolf remains optimistic that the song of Anon can be reclaimed through writing. The 'anonymous world', she suggests, still exists; it is the 'world beneath our consciousness' 'to which we can still return' ('A', p. 584). This subliminal world forms the impulses, the literary 'sensations', that can be expressed in writing. 'Thinking in common,' enables the writer to introduce the unarticulated instincts of the anonymous world to the palpable spaces of print.

As this thesis has argued, material objects in Woolf's fiction often convey traces of female histories that lie outside written and recorded narratives. They offer the potential to provide counter-narratives to the dominant discourses of culture. Establishing an association between Woolf's literary concerns with materiality and her feminist politics reveals how her use of objects, colours, forms, works to reinsert the underlying 'collective consciousness', the forgotten histories of marginalised individuals, within her written texts. This idea, as the introduction proposed, forms the basis of her short fiction 'Solid Objects', but in *Orlando* she also suggests that the anonymous past can be brought to the present through writing. After successfully negotiating the increasing commercialisation of the literary industry in the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Orlando returns to her home in which material traces of the past can be found throughout. Composing 'The Oak Tree' enables her to experience an embeddedness in the house and the material history. This enables Woolf to foreground the interdependence between writing, materiality and the literary past:

In this window-seat, she had written her first verses; in that chapel, she had been married. And she would be buried here, she reflected, kneeling on the window-sill in the long gallery and sipping her Spanish wine. Though she could hardly fancy it. The body of the heraldic leopard would be making yellow pools on the floor the day they lowered her to lie among her ancestors. She, who believed in no immortality, could not help feeling that her soul would come and go forever with the reds on the panels and the greens on the sofa. For the room [...] shone like a shell that has lain at the bottom of the sea for centuries and has been crusted over and painted a million tints by the water; it was rose and yellow, green and sand coloured. (*O*, pp. 302-303)

Orlando's room, in a house that can be considered a representation of literary history, is here fully illuminated, and the image of the shell, which was once submerged but has been re-surfaced, anticipates the essay 'Professions for Women' (1931), in which the aspiring woman writer fishes for literary inspiration in the depths of her mind. The passage also suggests that female history is submerged rather than lost completely. The room in Orlando's home is an incarnation of the 'room of one's own' that Woolf aims to establish for women in the metaphorical house of literary history. Painted by the 'million tints of water' which have coloured it 'yellow, green and sand-coloured' this space encapsulates the prismatic nature of Woolf's colour vision, which counteracts, as Goldman argues, the chiaroscuro of patriarchy in its assertion of binary oppositions.<sup>5</sup> As this thesis demonstrated, Woolf's use of colour in her work is indelibly linked to her feminist politics, but her water-imagery in this passage of *Orlando* is also reflected in 'Professions for Women'. Orlando's trance-like state that enables her to write, is mirrored in this essay as the aspiring young female writer explores the complex nuances of her own imagination: 'She was letting her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being'.<sup>6</sup> Like *Orlando*

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<sup>5</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women', p. 143.

and ‘Anon’, in ‘Professions for Women’ Woolf uses the idea of a collective unconscious (*our* unconscious”) as an image for the imagination, a shared resource that can be tapped into for creative inspiration.

Woolf reinforces her idea that writing is not solely the expression of individual creativity throughout her works. Writing is, as Ryan suggests, Woolf’s ‘world making’; literary works are for her a ‘conceptual model of a non-hierarchical, intricately interconnected whole [which] is suffused with the vitality and the materiality of the “dominant” sensation.’<sup>7</sup> The experience of reality (the “dominant” sensation of that temporal moment) through writing can be shaped into an intricately formed ‘pattern’, which encapsulates the multiplicity of subjective experience. In its inclusivity, writing Woolf suggests has the potential to offer new ways of re-making narratives that suggest a single and static representation of reality. Although the interplay between materiality and aesthetics speaks directly to Ryan’s idea of ‘dualism’ in Woolf’s work in the interaction between language and thought, between ‘granite’ and ‘rainbow’, it also reflects Woolf’s own theory of the ‘instincts’ that provide the foundation for her own art.<sup>8</sup> In her conceptualisation of her writing processes in ‘[A] Sketch of the Past’, Woolf rarely defines her art as a solipsistic act. Rather, she describes it as an endeavour she shares with the ‘many thousand ancestresses’ that have come before her (‘SP’, p. 82). This instinctual connection with the past, she suggests, provides the ‘shock receiving capacity’ that makes her a writer (‘SP’, p. 85). It also, as we have seen, informs her concept of the ‘anonymous world’, in which the collective consciousness of the ‘body of the people’ (*AROO*, p. 85) can be introduced to print. Examining Woolf’s textual processes, from her manuscripts to her printing texts, this thesis revealed the extent to which her creative impulses are conditioned by materiality, both in the circumstances of writing and her lived experience of daily life.

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<sup>7</sup> Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Ryan, *ibid.*, pp. 26-57.



Woolf's own textual practices, then, offer new ways of thinking about the interplay between matter and aesthetics in her writing. Through an engagement with her literary materiality, this thesis has foregrounded several key points about Woolf's works: firstly, how materials in their various manifestations (colours, forms, solid objects) signify both the presence and absence of marginalised female histories; secondly, that colours and solid objects work covertly in her texts to weave differing perspectives that counteract the dominant political discourses; and, thirdly, that Woolf's embodied experience of creating her texts, printing and binding them by hand, enables her to 'make real', to materialise, both her literary and political aesthetics. This in turn allows us to read Woolf's theorisation of textuality as a material transferal or exchange, with the book as an art form that invites both a physical interaction with its printed manifestation and an active participation in its expression of meaning. Woolf's dialogic notion of the text also works to foreground the reader's involvement, counteracting the authority of language in print. While various readings of her works have stressed her detachment from everyday materiality, a predominant emphasis on psychology, transcendence and abstraction,<sup>9</sup> reading her creative processes as materially engaged sheds light on how her modernist aesthetics are conditioned by their means of production. This thesis, therefore, suggests that Woolf's own impulses for writing are generated from her interactions with the palpable matter of everyday life. In doing so, it further situates the Woolfian 'moment of being', as a materially grounded phenomenon, which enacts the complex relationship between the thinking subject and the observable environment.

This idea is, perhaps, made most apparent in '[A] Sketch of the Past' in Woolf's description of her own memory of the colours of her mother's dress, and the flower at Talland House, which sensitises her to the relationship between coherence and distinction ('SP', p. 78; p. 84). Each example foregrounds vision and materiality as the basis for her experience. But these

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (1986); Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, 'Bloomsbury and Empire', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*, ed. Victoria Rosner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 112-27 (p. 112).

personal ‘moments of being’ for Woolf also provide her with a resource for writing. In her palimpsestuous understanding of time, she suggests that her past can be experienced in her present, and through writing aspects of her memory can be solidified in language. The ‘avenue’ of experiences, lying in a ‘long ribbon of scenes [and] emotions’ behind her in ‘[A] Sketch of the Past’, can be called upon to provide the basis for her literary art (‘SP’, p. 81). In *The Waves*, Woolf similarly conceptualises the past, as well as the literary past, in substantial terms. As silence falls between Neville and his companion, he relishes the moment that enables him to think: ‘And then not to talk. To follow the dark paths of the mind and enter the past, to visit books, to brush aside their branches and break off some fruit’ (*TW*, p. 143). In thinking about the past, and in reading, Woolf suggests that there is a material interaction. She insinuates that texts can be visited, entered, and palpable objects (here fruit from the branches) can be retrieved. On reading Shelley in childhood, Rhoda also experiences a similar phenomenon: ‘Here is a poem about a hedge. I will wander down it and pick flowers, green cowbind, and the moonlight-coloured May, wild roses and ivy serpentine’ (*TW*, p. 43). Rhoda retrieves these flowers from the pages, and offers them as a gift to an intangible recipient: ‘I will bind flowers in one garland and clasp them and present them – Oh to whom?’ (*TW*, p. 43). By emphasising the palpable experiences of reading, Woolf suggests that textuality can be considered in material terms. Just as John collects solid objects in order to trace forgotten narratives, literature can also offer a means of re-reading history. Significantly, the three colours Woolf draws attention to in Rhoda’s reading of Shelley’s poem ‘The Question’ are the purple, green and white of suffrage colours, which enacts a potentially feminist re-reading of the literature of the past.

Thinking about the Woolfian ‘moment of being’, this thesis has considered how intangible thoughts and experiences are often formulated by an engagement with materiality. But its concern with Woolf’s literary materiality at the Hogarth Press marries Woolf’s conceptualisation of thought as transcendent to its material manifestation in literary form. As the introduction to this thesis outlined, Woolf often uses the image of the ‘integument’ to describe

the fragile tangibility of her aesthetics, and how language can be considered a thin, skin-like covering for the writer's thoughts. With its potential to rupture, transfer and stain, the integument is an image that also enables Woolf to convey the complex interaction between the reader and writer in her conceptualisation of textuality: the text, although undeniably material, is neither solid nor fixed, bordered but also borderless. Like the seeping inks of her first hand-printed works at the Hogarth Press, Woolf envisions the text as a mutable artefact, continually oscillating between solidity and insubstantiality. By examining her literary materiality, this thesis shows the multiple ways in which Woolf's aesthetics are informed by her interactions with the material substances of print. If, as Maggie Humm notes, the Hogarth Press taught Woolf the 'practicalities' of design and aesthetics, this thesis foregrounded the interrelation between her textual practice and her writing.<sup>10</sup> While Woolf's early short fictions, written and produced during the early years of the Hogarth Press, provided her the freedom in which to investigate various narrative techniques, this thesis has argued that these experiments are often shaped by their own palpability.

As chapter one suggested, in its specific temporality, its lack of movement or progression in terms of plot, 'The Mark on the Wall' epitomises the Woolfian 'moment of being' as a heightened moment of awareness, in which the fluctuations of the thinking mind comprehends a single and solitary black mark upon a white wall. But Woolf's first fictional work at the Hogarth Press also exposes the influence of the material environment on the narrator's processes of thought. Her reading of the mark mirrors our own processes of reading the text, drawing together a myriad of definitions that counteract those that precede and succeed them. Like the substances of print, the text makes the reader conscious of the material interaction between the reader and the text. As Marcus suggests 'the narrator finds that perceptual undecidability allows the mind to wander freely, into and through history, pre-history and post-history.'<sup>11</sup> The mark is

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<sup>10</sup> Humm, *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 19.

a means through which Woolf can converge the past, present and the future, and this reinforces the central role materiality plays in her literary aesthetics. Just as the essay ‘Anon’, enacts how echoes of the past underlie the form printed text, in ‘The Mark on the Wall’, Woolf demonstrates how alternative and varied histories can be generated through the reading of a material inscription. Her resistance to offer a firm definition of the mark until the very end of the text, also allows her to avoid textual authority, foregrounding the subjective processes of reading through an interaction with the material substances of the fiction. The narrative makes the reader conscious of the palpability of language, and Woolf’s incorporation of Dora Carrington’s woodcut designs highlights the way in which her emphasis on literary materiality was formulated in conversation with the plastic arts. While scholars often consider these woodcut designs to have little function in terms of literary representation (in other words, they are not often considered illustrative), this thesis closely read these images and suggested an underlying dialogue between word and image in the short fiction. Mirroring the narrative, Carrington’s woodcuts place an emphasis on both movement and stasis, female subjectivity and the arts, literary history and materiality. Both Woolf and Carrington’s texts work in synthesis to challenge the fixity of surface tensions (the solidity of print), which fits with Woolf’s emphasis on the dialogic nature of reading.

The material substances of print underline ‘The Mark on the Wall’, as chapter one deliberated, but the materiality of colour and paint influenced the aesthetics of Woolf’s second publication at the Hogarth Press: *Kew Gardens*. This text demonstrates, perhaps most overtly, how she converses with her sister’s visual art. Although Vanessa Bell provided two woodcut designs for the first edition of the short story, and later re-designed the entire *mise-en-page* of the third edition, Woolf’s narrative places an emphasis on the similarities between visual and verbal modes of communication. The silences that fall between the four dialogues that structure the text allows her to contemplate the visuality of writing, while also pointing towards the blank spacing that Bell works into her woodcuts. As Hana Leaper suggests, ‘[s]ilence is an important

structural component and tool for creating spaces of reflection within each woman's work [...] they speak to each other's silences.<sup>12</sup> In these spaces of contemplation, Woolf tests the capacity of language to convey the effects of painting, in particular through her literary use of colour. Just as the flowerbed at the garden in St Ives initiates her impulse to describe the composite parts of the flower in her early experience of the 'moment of being', here the physical properties of flowers at Kew enable her to foreground distinct spots of colour and the play of light upon them. Language is synonymous with colour in this text, and this thesis' reading of *Kew Gardens* characterises the fiction as a literary revisioning of Vanessa Bell's painting *A Conversation* (1913-16) in which the interplay between silence and speech is centralised in the composition. The material aspects of the first edition, its bindings, papers and inks, also enable Woolf to emphasise the palpable nature of fiction. The soft thickness of its pages, as well as the mutable colouration of its bindings, reverberate in Woolf's literary aesthetics, which speak directly to her conceptualisation of textuality as a material transfer. Woolf's dialectic exchange with Bloomsbury aesthetics in this short fiction, then, enables her to challenge the distinctions between the sister arts by placing an emphasis on the materiality of their respective modes of production.

While the palpability of colour informs Woolf's conversations with the visual arts in her short fictions, in *Jacob's Room*, as chapter two highlighted, her experimentation with the form of the novel reveals the extent to which her early work at the Hogarth Press sensitised her to the visuality of the *mise-en-page*. Printing short fictions at the Press influenced her to think about how blank spacing could be deployed as part of the text's system of representation, how pauses and ruptures in temporal progression can denote loss and emptiness. Returning to the manuscript version of the text reveals that Woolf formulated this episodic design in her draft material, which suggests that she was thinking about the formal layout of the printed novel even during her processes of composition. While her manipulation of form allows her to un-write the

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<sup>12</sup> Hana Leaper, 'Sisterly Silences: The Unveiling of Hidden Voices in Vanessa Bell's Illustrations for Virginia Woolf's *Kew Gardens*', *The Luminary*, Issue 4 (2014), 117-129 (120).

conventional ‘thirty-two chapter’ novel, as Briggs suggests,<sup>13</sup> it also enables her to experiment with the effects of Post-Impressionist visual form in language. In its emphasis on varied and varying perspectives, in what is often described as her ‘cubist’ design,<sup>14</sup> Woolf’s formalism in *Jacob’s Room* positions the text within a wider culture of fragmentation that appeared in the art world. With ‘the X group [and] pictures in Shaftsbury’ Woolf immersed herself in its aesthetic innovations, and in a letter to Vanessa Bell, she acknowledges that ‘something in their style might be written’ (L2, p. 429). Woolf’s manipulation of form in this text also allows us to think about how space, particularly domestic space, can be read as a signifier of identity. Jacob’s possessions, as Lurz notes, can be read as a material expression of himself.<sup>15</sup> This chapter suggested, however, that Woolf’s representation of solid objects in this text speaks directly to her theory of materiality, in which material artefacts, in their stasis and circulation, act as a means of recording the histories of those who interact with them. Like the mark on the wall that constantly evades definition, the varying subjectivities that engage with Jacob as well as the material artefacts that record his existence, continually place his identity in a state of flux. Rather than provide a coherent account of his character, Woolf constantly writes and rewrites Jacob, encouraging her readers to interpret his sense of self through his interactions with others and the objects that remain within his room after his death. While materiality signifies loss in the novel, it also acts as a constant reminder of the mutability of subject in the same way that Woolf’s early printing practices disrupt the notion of textual solidity and stability.

Chapter three proposed that in tracing Woolf’s process of writing *Mrs Dalloway*, the archival material relating to the novel provides new ways of reading her conceptualisation of textuality. The way in which she drafts, binds and catalogues her manuscript raises interesting questions about her theorisation of the text as a borderless entity. With textual intersections and interruptions scattered throughout the manuscript, the draft version of *Mrs Dalloway* is a

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<sup>13</sup> Briggs, ‘Modernism’s Lost Hope’, p. 91.

<sup>14</sup> McNeillie, ‘Bloomsbury’, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Lurz, *The Death of the Book*, p. 111.

composite entity in which a network of tropes and images are echoed and reiterated across the textual boundaries of the novel, as well as the essays and short fictions alongside which it was composed. By reading *Mrs Dalloway* palimpsestuously, chapter three suggests that the published edition of the text contains traces of its textual history in its textual present. It, therefore, reads Woolf's writing practices as a process of layering. Examining revisions of the opening sentence of the novel, the chapter outlined the significant function materials play in the text's system of representation. The three variant words Woolf revises – gloves, flowers, and silk – offer different ways of reading her engagement with the First World War, suggesting a direct correlation between her textual practice and the central thematic concerns of the novel. The palimpsestuous nature of the manuscript is also reflected in Woolf's representation of time and memory within the narrative. The Woolfian 'moment of being' in this text, as chapter three revealed, is informed by its palimpsestuous mode of production; Mrs Dalloway's experience of the city facilitates her engagement with the past, which continually overlaps with the present in the temporal moments of the text. Foregrounding the past in the narrative, Woolf draws a parallel between memory and writing, not unlike her own literary impulses, which, in '[A] Sketch of the Past', are generated by her own memories of Talland House. Reading the novel as a palimpsest provides new ways of understanding the processes of memory in the novel, but, as the chapter proposed, it offers an insight into Woolf's theory of textuality as complex and mutable, in which previous iterations of the text reverberate in its published state.

Chapter four of the thesis turned its attention to the juncture between Woolf's textual practices and her feminist-materialist politics. While her short fictions draw attention to traces of disparaged female histories in material objects, in *To the Lighthouse* Woolf revises the Post-Impressionist aesthetics formulated by Roger Fry and Clive Bell in order to incorporate the experiences of women. Lily's colourism in this text, as Goldman demonstrates, mirrors the visual

aesthetics of suffrage and suffragette demonstrations in the early twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> But Woolf's particular attention to pigments of blue and green reflect her own experimentation with colour in her short fictions, establishing a connection between her literary materiality at the Hogarth Press and her visual aesthetics in *To the Lighthouse*. Although the manuscript reveals that, in the early stages of drafting the text, Woolf professed less confidence in her representation of the painting process, her modification and revision of Lily Briscoe enables her to address directly the idea of the 'aesthetic sensation'. Fry, in his reading of Cézanne's paintings, suggests that 'sensation', or the impulses for painting, can be translated in material terms upon the canvas in the layering of paint. Woolf, however, verbalises this process in *To the Lighthouse*. In doing so, she draws parallel between her concept of the 'literary impulse' and Fry's theories. As chapter four demonstrated, Woolf's depiction of Lily's use of colour furthers the similarities between language and paint. Her thick application of pigments upon the canvas her painting process mirrors Post-Impressionism's use of colour to create form, but her diaphanous conceptualisation of Lily's aesthetics reflects Woolf's own theory of textuality. 'Feathery and evanescent' (*TL*, p. 186), Lily's colours are not static and unchanging, but like the iridescent wings of a butterfly change in the play of light upon its surface. Reading Woolf's textual practices alongside her literary representation of the painting process, chapter four traced the parallels she draws between the aesthetics of literature and visual art.

As chapter five demonstrated, Woolf's dialogue with Post-Impressionism continues in *The Waves*, and it read her imagistic use of colours and material objects as signifiers of her feminism. Although not overtly her most political text, its engagement with the materiality of daily life, and the appearance and reappearance of solid objects throughout the narrative, work to weave a visual feminist-materialist aesthetic in the fabric of her text. Vanessa Bell's mosaicking technique, which juxtaposes distinct colours upon her canvas, is reflected in Woolf's imagism in

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<sup>16</sup> Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, p. 73.



the novel, which has a similarly mosaic effect. Often in the soliloquies Woolf depicts the observation of material artefacts that pose almost no narrative function in terms of plot, and these artefacts function in solely visual terms; in other words, they are only comprehended in the subject's perception of them. Initially Susan's image of the orchid and the mushroom, and her arrangement of these items, is almost surreal in its dislocation from the events at this point in the narrative. However, reading Woolf's colouration of these images (purple and white) shows how her attention to these visual signifiers exposes the feminist imagism that underlines the work. By examining two of the two most marginalised voices in critical readings of the text, those of Susan and Jinny, this chapter highlighted how their everyday materialism is underlined by colour, and how these can be read as signifiers of their politics.

This thesis revealed how Woolf's engagement with artefacts, both in her textual practices, as well as her representation of objects in her literary works, challenges the assumption that her aesthetics are abstracted from material reality. Turning to her manuscripts, and conscious of the materialist turn in Woolf scholarship, it also offers new ways of thinking about how her interactions with Bloomsbury and Post-Impressionist visual aesthetics informs her emphasis upon the visual nature of writing. The way Woolf demarcates language as a tangible substance influences her ideas about textuality, as well as her literary aesthetics, which foreground the visual aspects of literature in the use of colour and form. Solid objects in her fictions also perform two significant functions: they signal the potential for alternative histories to be traced in objects from the past, but they also signal the political aesthetics of her current historical moment. Throughout her work, Woolf centralises an oscillation between the intangibility of thought and the tangibility of writing, as well as the way in which the literary 'sensation' can be 'made real' in language. For her, literature is a material substance that invites a tactile interaction. Just as Neville and Rhoda in *The Waves* imagine retrieving physical objects from the pages of their books, so too does Woolf encourage her readers to solidify literary meaning in palpable shapes of their own.

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