

ABSTRACT WSA 24 (2018)

A Driving Bloomsbury: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, and the Meaning of the Motor-Car

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The significance of modern technology shifts according to the contexts of use. Given its multiple uses and connotations, the motor-car links what only appear to be dissimilar aspects of modernity: autonomy, innovation, tradition, consumerism, patriotism. Articulating national and global investments as well as individual desires and subject positions, the automobiles of the Bloomsbury Group illustrate the complexities that attend technology's integration into daily life. Focused on the motor-cars of sisters Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, this paper argues that their respective vehicles marked financial agency and artistic success, but the tension between driving as a personally liberating act and car ownership as a reiteration and consolidation of socially determined position reveals the contradictions of the age. Where Woolf navigates her ambivalence towards social status by deploying motor-car marketing in her diaries and letters, Bell negotiates the commercialization of the art world and the English countryside through her participation in the Shell-Mex "See Britain First" advertising campaign. Woolf's and Bell's representations of automobilism demonstrate their almost inevitable participation in the competing discourses of interwar British car culture, exemplifying its remarkable effect on lived modernity—an effect enunciated with terrible clarity when civilian motors are transformed into military machines in the global conflicts of the late-1930s.

The Dramatic Modern Novel: Mimesis and The Poetics of Tragedy in *Mrs. Dalloway*

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Virginia Woolf sought throughout her life to achieve a dramatic quality – an immediacy – in her narrative form, and Aristotle's dramatic poetics inspired her to experiment in *Mrs. Dalloway* with narrative mediation and formal constraints in reconfiguring the modern novel. The novel's narrative discourse modifies Aristotle's concept of verse-form by offering a depth of character interiority not available in direct speech while retaining the dramatic quality of directness, of mimetic showing, by developing a minimally intrusive narrator. Such discourse conveys the phenomenology of experience, bringing the reader into more intimate relation with the experience at hand. This "narrative intimacy" converts the isolated, passive reader of the didactic novel into a reader who privately but actively collaborates in the reading experience, free from the authority of the narrator or a performance and communal live audience. Woolf also reworks the dramatic unities of time, place and action into a "mimetic economy," where formal constraint enables her to advance a critique of dominant narratives and to celebrate individual privacy as against public normativity or sameness. The novel resists a satisfying closure to action, instead offering a paradoxical closing and reopening that reflects an interpretation of modernity in which strangers reach across lines of otherness to forge fleeting but surprisingly generative connections with one another. To suggest that Woolf reconstitutes narrative using a modified dramatic poetics is to suggest a new frame for reading *Mrs. Dalloway* and to provide a broader context for the role that dramatic theory played in her changes to narrative form.

Virginia Woolf's Egyptomania: Echoes Of *The Book Of The Dead* in *To The Lighthouse*.

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Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is imbued with images, symbols, characters, and narrative elements taken directly from Egyptian myth and from *The Book of the Dead*, a reflection of Woolf's classical reading and of the rampant "Egyptomania" of the 1920s. This elaborate textual threading emulates a co-narrator, a created persona extracted from her study of Egypt, an alternate-discourse "I" to the "I" who protests she "meant nothing" by the novel. This article reviews the Osiris-Isis-Horus myth, the body of published literature about Egypt available to Woolf, and the cultural phenomenon of Egyptomania, describing how character names, locales, plot elements and other details of the novel echo aspects of *The Book of the Dead* and Egyptology. Woolf's overlay of Egyptian gods on the Ramsay family requires a re-examination of her treatment of Freud's Oedipal complex, a concept she resisted even while employing it in the novel. Further, Woolf's allusions to the matrilineal culture of ancient Egypt and the international cult of Isis demonstrate her search for an alternate discourse, less patriarchal than Graeco-Roman, Judaeo-Christian, and Freudian modes. Finally, there is the question — perhaps unanswerable — of whether Woolf's "Egyptianizing" of her novel during its writing constituted a private coding of the text for her literary friend and lover, Vita Sackville-West. This study includes an examination of Woolf's own statements in letters about *To the Lighthouse*, and the chronology of her choice of character names in the holograph manuscript. Finally, it presents a summary of some prior critics' discoveries of Egyptian connections in Woolf's writings.

After Anger: Negative Affect and Feminist Politics in Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*

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In *Art and Anger*, Jane Marcus calls for women writers and critics to embrace and express their anger, while also imagining that the "daughters of anger" – feminist critics of the next generation – will require different methods. This essay follows Marcus and other critics in asserting the value of anger as a feminist strategy of resistance, while also questioning the idea that emotion is legitimized through its personal source. Through a reading of *Three Guineas*, I argue that Woolf conveyed her anger impersonally in a challenge to conventionally gendered understandings of the relationship between politics and affect. This essay counters the narrative of Woolf's anger as a suppressed personal truth and shifts the focus to the way she uses language to convey affect as part of a feminist methodology. Moving from impersonal anger to other "weak" and negative emotions, I read the emotional stance of the Society of Outsiders alongside Sara Ahmed's concept of the "feminist killjoy" and argue that Woolf's juxtaposition of images and text allows her to reveal the limitations of sympathy in forming a political response to injustice. This essay ultimately suggests that Woolf provides a model for a collective feminist politics that complicates the teleological narrative of feminism in which emotion operates as a site of truth.

The Reader Awakes: Pedagogical Form and Utopian Impulse in *The Years*

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This essay considers Virginia Woolf's 1937 novel *The Years* as a novel where the aesthetic functions pedagogically to train the receptive reader's imagination toward liberation from

oppressive literary and social structures. This interpretation develops from implications within Jane Marcus's reading of Woolf's later writings and seeks an understanding of how we might continue to learn to read *The Years*. Marcus proposed that the form of *Three Guineas*, which required "much noisy page turning", was key to the way it sought to teach readers to read and, thus, to think. This insight can be applied to *The Years* to develop an idea of the novel's subversive pedagogy: the way it teaches readers to imagine new alternatives to old forms and exhausted ideologies. Such a reading constructs *The Years* not as a work proposing a utopian system, but rather as a novel of quietly utopian desires, a novel that yearns for an ever-shifting unity of senses and sensibilities that could resist and perhaps even triumph over the threats of authoritarianism, patriarchy, nationalism, and militarism.

"Echo Texts": Woolf, Krzywicka and *The Well of Loneliness*

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While there exists an important and growing body of work on Virginia Woolf and her role in the trial of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, there is to date very little scholarship on the early global reception of the novel. To address this lacuna, I compare the reception of *The Well* in Britain and Poland, juxtaposing two important statements by public intellectuals, Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Irena Krzywicka's preface to *Źródło samotności*, the Polish translation of Hall's novel. In this article, inspired by Jane Marcus's scholarship, I explore the roles that Woolf and Krzywicka played in defending Hall's novel and preserving its emancipatory message. While reconstructing the publishing history of *Źródło samotności* in the biographical and political contexts of interwar Poland, I present *The Well* as it is handled by the "Rój" Publishing Society, translated, censored, and reviewed in the Polish press. Following Marcus's notion of "echo texts" and her transgressive insights, I argue that the Polish reception of *The Well of Loneliness* casts light on the novel's popularity in different cultural environments for at least half a century and reveals new networks of transnational modernism.

"H.M.S. Orlando: The Metamorphosing, Imperial Vessel"

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In addition to multiple moments in which Woolf's fictional "biographer" describes Orlando's body with vessel-related language, the repeated, literal presence of ships in the novel inflects its interest in and experimentation with the historical progress of the British Empire along the span of Orlando's life—and the problems that his, then her, metamorphosing body causes for that progress. Through a hyperbolically long lifespan, Orlando as an adorned vessel of the British Empire at turns exemplifies, contradicts, or proves incompatible with imperial work. By its constant incongruity with the arbitrary yet stringently assigned cultural mores for "rigging out" the body of one of the Empire's vessels of expansionist power, Orlando's metamorphosing body demonstrates the tenuousness of the accepted English colonial-historical narrative.