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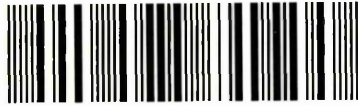
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# **Virginia Woolf and Cinema: Adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway***

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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# Abstract

This thesis proposes a return to the issue of fidelity criticism in adaptation studies through a detailed consideration of the adaptations of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Within adaptation studies the issue of fidelity and the role of the source novel have been relegated to the sidelines in response to a logophilic prejudice which dominated early studies, and as a consequence intertextuality and genre have become more pronounced. I redress this negation of the source text, theorising new ways of conceiving of the source-adaptation relationship. I explicitly focus upon source-associated intertextualities to illustrate how a return to fidelity can open up a plethora of readings rather than close them down. In doing so the importance of the source text is foregrounded, as it is through the source that these intertexts are introduced, whilst demonstrating that two seemingly exclusive approaches to adaptation can be married in what I term a "web of intertextuality".

I develop Gerard Genette's theory of *stylistic imitation* in order to theorise how an adaptation may develop a relationship with its source based on rhetoric, or style. I consider how Marleen Gorris' *Mrs Dalloway* (1997) adapts Woolf's literary impressionism through the use of the visual (editing and framing) as well as the aural, including the verbal (voice-over) and the non-verbal (the scored soundtrack). My analysis of *The Hours*, both Michael Cunningham's novel (1998) and Stephen Daldry's film (2002), examines how both texts develop a stylistic relationship with Woolf's novel through the presence of other Woolf intertexts such as her fiction (*The Waves*), her literary criticism ("Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown"), as well as her autobiographical writings. I address the diverse nature of intertextuality as I analyse alternative intertexts such as the cultural iconicity of Virginia Woolf and the figure of the hysteric. I consider how the merging of fiction, biography and cultural iconicity influences adaptation and its critical reception, promoting an on-going dialogue across the multiple texts present. The thesis found that a reclamation of the source novel and a return to fidelity produced a new means of conceiving of adaptation that incorporated both the source text and intertextuality which, through the web of intertextuality, presented an open, non-linear and potentially limitless way of reading adaptation.



# Introduction

In 1926 Virginia Woolf wrote "The Cinema", an essay which examines "the art of cinema" and considers its ability to portray "life as it is when we have no part in it."<sup>1</sup> This essay has been cited as an example of how logophilia has corrupted the study of the film adaptation; however, such a stance has misappropriated Woolf's writing and it is necessary to reinstate Woolf's enthusiasm for film.

For Woolf, the burgeoning art-form is full of potential: "No fantasy could be too far-fetched or insubstantial;"<sup>2</sup> and she believes that the new medium "has within its grasp innumerable symbols for emotions that have so far failed to find expression."<sup>3</sup> She acknowledges that the cinema is still an immature art-form and is yet to master its tools, but it is the anticipation of something new that excites Woolf. Just as her earlier essays on fiction demanded that writers experiment with finding a new means of representation, as I shall explore in chapter two, Woolf's essay on the cinema is critical of an art-form whose potential remains unexplored and calls upon the filmmaker to embrace the unknown.

Woolf argues that film-makers have failed to recognise cinema's potential and have, instead, turned to literature:

All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to the moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural.<sup>4</sup>

It is this quotation has been employed by the adaptation critic to illustrate literature's bias against the film adaptation, as I discuss in chapter one, but what they fail to recognise is what Woolf is asking for. Kamilla Elliott, for instance, argues that Woolf privileges the word over the visual but she fails to consider Woolf's writing on film alongside her critique of fiction which makes similar demands of literature: in chapter two I examine in detail Woolf's essays "Modern Fiction" and "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" which call for writers of fiction to embrace experimentation and devise a new means of representing life in fiction through a new, impression-driven literature. Woolf's critique of the cinema focuses upon an analysis of an adaptation which relies upon the material: "'Here is Anna Karenina.' A voluptuous lady in black velvet wearing pearls ... 'Anna falls in love with



Vronsky' — that is to say, the lady in black velvet falls into the arms of a gentleman in uniform and they kiss with enormous succulence, great deliberation, and infinite gesticulation, on a sofa in an extremely well-appointed library, while a gardener incidentally mows the lawn."<sup>5</sup> A kiss in a well-appointed library may signify a couple in love but it does little to convey the experience of falling in love. Woolf is demanding more than a representation of what happened, she is demanding that the experience of what happened is represented. Woolf is not arguing that this is all cinema is capable of but she is critical of the fact that this is all that film-makers seem to doing. Her critique is that the potential of cinema is not being explored and that, just as with the literature she targets in the aforementioned essays, it fails to move beyond the material and convey life as it is experienced.

For Woolf, the anticipation of cinema being able to achieve something that literature, and other art-forms, cannot is exciting:

Is there ... some secret language which we feel and see, but never speak, and, if so, could this be made visible to the eye? Is there any characteristic which thought possesses that can be rendered visible without the help of words? It has speed and slowness; dartlike directness and vaporous circumlocution. But it has, also, especially in moments of emotion, the picture-making power, the need to lift its burden to another bearer; to let an image run side by side along with it. The likeness of the thought is for some reason more beautiful, more comprehensible, more available, than the thought itself.<sup>6</sup>

Woolf is not denigrating the film adaptation, rather she is rejecting those that choose the "easier and simpler" options and demands more of the film-maker, just like she demands more of her fellow writers. Unfortunately, Woolf's refutation of the film-maker who chooses not to embrace the potential of this new art-form has been misunderstood and adopted by a number of adaptation critics as an example of logophiles that have lambasted adaptation. However, if we turn to the penultimate paragraph of Woolf's essay, we see how she envisions cinema achieving what literature cannot:

The past could be unrolled, distances annihilated, and the gulfs which dislocate novels (when, for instance, Tolstoy has to pass from Levin to Anna and in doing so jars his story and wrenches and arrests our sympathies) could by the sameness of background, by the repetition of some scene, be smoothed away.<sup>7</sup>



Woolf is suggesting that, should film-makers embrace cinema's devices, cinema could achieve what literature cannot but in order to do so, film-makers need to understand what it is that cinema in itself can achieve.

Adopting a "ready-made package" is, it would seem, of detriment to the new art-form; inhibiting experimentation and promoting an unhealthy reliance upon comparison that is detrimental to both the novel and film: "it is only when we give up trying to connect the pictures with the book that we guess from some accidental scene ... what the cinema might do if left to its own devices."<sup>8</sup> Whilst Woolf is commenting upon the need to discover cinema's tools, she is also making a valuable critique of how the film adaptation is often viewed in relation to the novel, pre-empting more recent moves within adaptation studies that ask for than a mere comparison of novel and film. It is my intention to consider how Woolf's impression-driven literature is adapted to film, considering how both her literature and the film adaptations draw upon their differing signifying systems to represent the impression. In doing so I will illustrate how cinema has fulfilled the potential Woolf imagined for both film and literature, whilst developing a theory of adaptation that embraces the relationship between the adaptation and its source founded upon style, as well as considering another strand of adaptation studies: intertextuality.

In this thesis, it is my intention to reclaim the role of the source novel in adaptation studies through a detailed study of the adaptations of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. I will explore the source novel's importance in conjunction with that of intertextuality, weaving the two separate factions of adaptation studies together into one *web of intertextuality*. This contrasts with earlier trends in adaptation studies which have rarely the two synonymously, but examined them as distinct entities. In the opening chapter, "Adaptation and Intertextual Webs", I will outline my approach to film adaptation and produce a theoretical foundation for my thesis which will engage with key developments within the field, featuring the work of theorists such as Brian MacFarlane, Sarah Cardwell, Kamilla Elliott and Linda Hutcheon. Integral to this theoretical foundation is Gerard Genette's theory of hypertextuality and his theory of *stylistic imitation*.



The second and third chapters provide a detailed examination of Woolf's writing and the source novel. Chapter two, "Mrs Woolf and Mrs Brown: A Rhetoric of Imitation and Impression", focuses on the *style* of Woolf's writing, examining in detail two of Woolf's key essays on writing fiction, "Modern Fiction" and "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown", which outline her impression-driven approach to fiction as exhibited in the oft-cited quotation from "Modern Fiction": "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel."<sup>9</sup> In the third chapter, "A Day in the Life of Mrs Dalloway: Impressions and Hysterical Lesbianism", I focus upon the role of the impression in Woolf's novel in order that I may explore how the adaptations adapt Woolf's literary impression in order to develop a stylistic relationship with the source. I also explore an element of the novel that is an integral feature of the intertextuality strand of this thesis: Septimus Smith and the figure of the hysteric. The cultural iconicity of the figure of the hysteric, I argue, allows for it to be treated as an alternate intertext, and in subsequent chapters I demonstrate how it emerges in the adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway*, most significantly in *The Hours* and the manner in which it was employed in the criticism of the film adaptation, yet not the novel. Chapter three also discusses the literary criticism of the novel, specifically the increasing interest in the novel's homosexual undercurrents. This, like the issue of hysteria, is pertinent for my discussion of the role of intertextuality within adaptation and I will address it in detail in chapter five when I explore its intertextual influence upon the literary adaptations. The chapter also considers the critical preoccupation with fixing "Clarissa as lesbian" as problematically negating other elements of Woolf's novel, especially Woolf's celebration of ambivalence. Again, this is fundamental for my discussion of Cunningham's *The Hours* in chapter five and his adaptation of Woolf's approach to writing.

Chapters four and five constitute a detailed analysis of the adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway*. The fourth chapter, "Adapting *Mrs Dalloway*: Stylistic Imitation and the Spectre of Woolf", opens with a discussion of the "unfilmable novel" and the notion that the work of certain authors cannot be adapted to screen. I then turn to the role of the source novel in adaptation, specifically examining how Gorris's film employs *stylistic imitation* to develop a relationship between the source novel and the film which. The final chapter, "*The Hours*: Adapting Mrs Woolf, Mrs



Brown and Mrs Dalloway," weaves together the multiple strands of this thesis to illustrate the central tenet: a return to the source novel and its author opens up adaptation studies to numerous, additional intertextual readings which, in turn, are interwoven with the other intertexts to produce a multi-layered web of intertextualities. I will examine the adaptations by both Cunningham and Daldry as well as the influence of intertexts such as literary biography, literary criticism, and cultural iconicity. Key to this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, is the co-promotion of the role of the source and the role of intertextuality to produce a balanced reading of the adaptation(s).



# Chapter One

## Adaptation and Intertextual Webs

### Adaptation and the Source Text

#### Understanding Adaptation and What Defines a Film as an Adaptation

The film adaptation can be, and is, most commonly comprehended as the transposing of novel to film, or, as Sarah Cardwell proposes “a film or television programme explicitly based on a book”.<sup>10</sup> Recent trends within adaptation studies have demonstrated a need to move beyond this novel-to-film relationship which has led to the emergence of intertextuality-driven studies, as well as the examination of alternative sources. A more than extreme response to this was Christine Geraghty’s *Now A Major Motion Picture* (2008) which chose to ignore the source and adaptive relationship altogether in favour of other anterior influences such as genre and marketing. I address this historical shift away from the source below in order to understand and redress the negation of the source which, as Cardwell’s definition suggests, has an integral role in both the definition and the study of the film adaptation. In doing so I am inviting adaptation studies to return to the issue of fidelity, but to view it with fresh eyes and interrogate it anew, putting aside past prejudices and concerns that led to its abandonment.

In this thesis I propose an approach to adaptation which incorporates both the study of the source and intertextuality. In chapter five I will argue that *The Hours*, for instance, adapts more than just the novel *Mrs Dalloway*, and that it has also textual associations with other writings by and about Woolf including fictional works such as *The Waves*, autobiographical writing such as her diaries and letters, as well as literary criticism and biography. The thesis, therefore, not only marries the study of the source with the study of intertextuality, but also echoes current studies of adaptation by considering the non-traditional intertext. For instance, the cultural icon of Woolf is a distinctly alternative intertext in that it has evolved from continually shifting, and contrasting, cultural perceptions of Woolf influenced by biographical and critical constructions of the writer. The cultural



icon of Woolf is not a written, or printed, intertext but rather something that occupies the less tangible, less quantifiable realm of cultural consciousness, much like the figure of the hysteric. So, whilst this study is concerned with the adaptation of one novel and its relationship to its adaptations it will also consider the presence of other texts including those more unusual textual influences such as the figure of the hysteric, as discussed in chapter three, or the cultural icon of Virginia Woolf, as detailed in chapter five.

The discussion of the adaptation of sources other than the novel is already present within adaptation criticism, for instance Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) which announces: "If you think adaptation can be understood by using novels and films alone, you're wrong."<sup>11</sup> A film can be adapted from a source which is not a novel: for instance, theatre to film adaptations such as Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, or the endless film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays; the current popularity of graphic novel and comic book adaptations such as *Ghost World*, *Sin City*, *Road to Perdition*, or the serial super-hero films such as *Batman*, *Superman*, *Spiderman*, and *X-men*. The adaptations of the latter tend to focus less upon the adaptation of any given narrative, of which there are many, but upon the title character(s), a move which is echoed by the series of *Shrek* films in which numerous fairy-tale characters appear outside of any of their narratives: for instance, the Three Blind Mice are already without their tails.

Other current trends in film adaptation further remove us from the idea that adaptation is simply novel-to-film as, for instance, the adaptation of computer games such as *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider* remove the written text altogether.<sup>12</sup> If one looks at the *Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy the stability of the idea of the adapted text is shaken further, as the source "text" in this instance is a roller-coaster ride. Adaptations, it should also be noted, like their source, can emerge in a variety of media, for instance, the *Harry Potter* series of novels has spawned a series of film adaptations, which have in turn been adapted into role-playing video-games whose release coincides with the films. Whilst I focus my study on the adaptations of a single source novel, the question of what constitutes a text, whether source or intertext, is one I explore in detail in chapter five when I engage with discussions of intertextuality and the intertext in relation to *The Hours*



and Virginia Woolf. It is necessary to acknowledge the adaptation of non-written, and therefore alternative sources because I propose that *The Hours* draws upon alternative, non-written intertexts as much as it does those written sources. For the present it is sufficient to say that such a multiplicity of source texts demands an acknowledgement and detailed consideration of multiple intertexts too.

The practice of film adaptation does not always readily acknowledge its source text, and it is useful to view adaptation as a relationship that is both overtly and covertly expressed. Many recent film adaptations openly credit the source novel, explicitly referencing it in the film's title for instance Baz Luhrman's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*; or in the opening title sequence when the source text and author's name are often preceded by "based upon", as seen in many of Disney's and the Hammer Studio's film adaptations. Commonly, adaptations retain their source's title, whilst others feature titular alterations, but these often function as a nominal homage to the source: Orson Welles' film *Chimes at Midnight* (1965), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henriad*, uses a line spoken by Falstaff (the film's central protagonist) to reference one of its source texts. Cunningham's *The Hours* nominally acknowledges its source: it is the working title adopted by Woolf when composing *Mrs Dalloway* and a playful allusion to the novel's autobiographical intertexts, such as Woolf's letters and diaries.

By contrast, film adaptations such as Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* do not make explicit their status as an adaptation. The film did not announce its source novel, Jane Austen's *Emma*, and its position as an adaptation was only made explicit through the publicity interviews Heckerling gave. At no point does Heckerling deny it is adaptation, it closely mirrors the narrative and characterisation of its source, however in contrast to normative practice it has refused to overtly label itself as such — one could consider its temporal and spatial relocation of Austen's narrative as another strategy which minimises the adaptation's links to its source.<sup>13</sup> In recent years there have been a number of teen-pic films adapting Shakespeare's plays which similarly relocate the narrative to a contemporary setting, often an American high-school, and celebrate their more covert references to the source: *10 Things I Hate About You*, a loose adaptation of *Taming of the Shrew*, nominally references its source as Katherina becomes Kat, Petruchio becomes Pat(rick) Ve-



rona; whilst *O* adopts a titular abbreviation of its source, *Othello*.<sup>14</sup> *Cruel Intentions* is another teen-pic adaptation, of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* which, like *Clueless*, uses its title as covert reference to the source: both *Cruel Intentions* and *Clueless* are references to key themes of their sources' narratives — Emma's naivety and the Marquise de Merteuil's sadistic machiavellianism.

Adaptations, then, can take numerous forms; they are more than just novel-to-film relationships and the manner in which they identify or acknowledge the adapting relationship that defines them as adaptations occurs across a broad spectrum: in this thesis I look at a selection of very different adaptations of Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* to illustrate this spectrum. Marleen Gorris' *Mrs Dalloway*, for instance, overtly identifies itself as an adaptation through its use of Woolf's title and retention of Woolf's narrative structure as well as reproducing period details such as costume and setting. *The Hours* employs Woolf's working title for a less obvious titular reference to its source, features three separate narratives set in three different times and locations to Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, yet it still celebrates its adaptive relationship in other ways such as stylistic imitation. Whilst the adaptive relationship may be defining, it is by no means readily defined.

Attempts have been made within adaptation studies to consider the "degree" of the adaptation, the most influential of which is the 1975 work of Geoffrey Wagner in *The Novel and the Cinema* which conceptualises three modes of adaptation: transposition, commentary, and analogy.<sup>15</sup> Wagner categorises the mode of adaptation in terms of the degree to which it is, or is not, faithful to the source text. Transposition is the product of "the minimum of apparent interference", commentary involves an alteration of the original in a "re-emphasis or re-structure", to offer a different stress, such as another political perspective; and analogy is a mode of adaptation which is seen to be "a fairly considerable departure" from its source.<sup>16</sup> Whilst Wagner's modes of adaptation clearly present the means to consider the various degrees of adaptation they still limit the study of adaptation to an examination of an adaptation's relationship with its source solely upon the grounds of fidelity, an issue from which contemporary adaptation studies of the last decade continues to distance itself.

The object of this study is not to define the various forms of adaptation, but it is necessary to acknowledge the diverse range of adaptive relationships so that we may explore the multiple means with which an adaptation constructs a rela-



tionship with its source. This is not to deny the significance of the array of intertextual relationships, for these are also of great importance as I emphasise, but an adaptation is not an adaptation because of its intertexts, it is an adaptation because it adapts a source, or even sources. It is the intention of this thesis to reclaim the role of the source text in adaptation criticism because adaptation, in whatever form it takes, is concerned with a source which goes through a process of adaptation, or change/transposition (the list here is endless), to produce another text: simply speaking, every adaptation has a source.<sup>17</sup> Or, to put it another way: adaptation is the intermedial relationship between the adapted text (the source) and the adapting text (the adaptation).

### **Literary Predilections: Issues of Fidelity, Iconophobia and Logophilia**

Numerous adaptation critics have noted how the study of film adaptation, and film studies in general, originated in literature departments. In her introduction to *Adaptations: Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999) Imelda Whelehan states: "The field of adaptations has in the past been dominated by scholars working primarily from an 'English lit.' perspective, who may be inclined to privilege the original text *above* its adaptations."<sup>18</sup> One significant implication that has arisen from this "almost unconscious prioritising of the fictional origin over the resulting film" is the issue of fidelity, a predilection for judging the film adaptation largely in terms of how "faithfully" it has reproduced the source, often a novel.<sup>19</sup>

Fidelity criticism dominated early adaptation criticism and produced an imbalanced judgement of the film adaptation in which the latter was to be judged solely in relation to the reproduction of the former, its origin, the original. In this schema, the novel is the "Original", the film a reproduction, a copy. John Orr's description of the film adaptation as a "picture-book" echoes how adaptation was defined in terms of what the film replicates or, more often than not, what it does not. The adaptation as "picture-book" also invokes a sense of inferiority: the phrase "picture-book" belongs almost exclusively to the realm of children's literature and, notably, there are the picture-book versions of classic literature explicitly devised and marketed to present the narratives of "great fiction" in a simplified format for children.<sup>20</sup> The "inferiority" of the picture-book similarly feeds into the debates of high/low culture; it is neither high-art nor high-literature. The adapta-



tion, then, is conceived of as both a childish reproduction and an inferior, populist, version of the high-brow original.

Fidelity criticism not only dictated that a “successful” film adaptation must faithfully reproduce the novel, but its literary prejudices introduced misconceptions of film as an inferior, wholly visual medium. One common criticism (and significant misconception) rallied against the film adaptation, or film in general, by literature academics is film’s inability to represent a character’s thoughts, their internal monologue or psychology. Again, it is to John Orr that I turn:

In fiction, narrative language is used to describe consciousness, but the camera has no analogous convention for rendering thought. Film relies more on visual gesture and expression but cannot hope to replicate the complex fictive language of feeling purely through the look.<sup>21</sup>

This negation of film’s other signifying systems such as verbal and non-verbal aural signifiers is something this study intends to address: in chapter four, for instance, I consider how Gorris’s film adaptation employs its non-verbal soundtrack in its stylistic imitation of Woolf’s literary impressionism, as discussed in detail in chapter three, exploring how both the intradiegetic soundtrack and the extradiegetic musical scoring contribute to the film’s representation of Septimus’s impressions of the world he inhabits. The dismissal of film as an inferior medium is something which has been refuted by adaptation theorists such as Robert Stam and Kamilla Elliott.

Adaptation criticism’s literary origins have, as Stam details, resulted in “deeply rooted and often unconscious assumptions” which have led to the privileging of the “superior” medium of literature over the “inferior” medium of film, that “picture-book”.<sup>22</sup> Two skewed assumptions identified by Stam as having plagued adaptation criticism are iconophobia and logophilia.<sup>23</sup> The former, Stam argues, stems from a “deeply rooted cultural prejudice against the visual arts” which can be traced back to “the Judaic-Muslim-Protestant prohibitions of ‘graven images’ [and] to the Platonic and Neoplatonic depreciation of the world of phenomenal appearance”.<sup>24</sup> The latter, whilst intrinsically linked to iconophobia, is specifically “the valorisation of the word” and is a prejudice evident in the fidelity-driven approaches to adaptation.<sup>25</sup>

This is echoed by Whelehan who is similarly concerned with how the novel (or the word) is valorised as high-art and the film (or the image) as “popular” is, thus, deemed culturally low-brow. Whelehan outlines how essays in *Adaptations*



seek to explore the high/low cultural divide and how it has impacted on the reception and criticism of the film adaptation, epitomised by the “increasing laments about the ‘dumbing down’” of literature and literary studies.<sup>26</sup> The polarisation of novel and film as high/low culture, as intellectually superior/inferior, has impacted on the study of adaptation and draws upon an older debate which polarises word and image.

In *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* Kamilla Elliott exposes the futility of a logophilic-iconophobic prejudice which influenced adaptation criticism, by turning to eighteenth-century poetry/painting debates to understand the current polarisation of novel/film, or word/image. The debates, Elliott explains, took two forms: one distanced the two media, positing them as diametrically opposed, defining “poetry as temporal, painting as spatial”, whereas the other identified them as “sister arts, setting up rhetorical family resemblances through interart analogies”.<sup>27</sup> The latter is perceived in the following interart analogies readily employed today to describe the novel and the film: cinematic writing (or narration), often used in reference to Woolf, who in spite of this is also considered to be impossible to adapt, as I explore in chapter four; and, literary cinema, often used in reference to heritage cinema (which, in addition, is closely associated with film adaptations).<sup>28</sup> The word/image divide, and how this has generated prejudicial and reductive attitudes towards the film adaptation, is acutely debunked by Elliott, most notably in her discussion of “the hybrid verbal-visual nature of illustrated novels and worded films”.<sup>29</sup>

Elliott explains how, “when [she] turned to examine points of interchange between words and images and other verbal and pictorial forms, a lively exchange emerged in which categorical differentiations unravelled and new interdisciplinary dynamics emerged”.<sup>30</sup> Elliott notes how, in silent film, intertitles (the word) were presented with “borders resembling picture frames” and how “artist signatures [were placed] in the bottom right-hand corner of these frames after painting conventions”.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the divide between word and image dissolves. In the chapter “Prose Pictures” Elliott illuminates (excuse the pun) her analysis of how hybrid visual-verbal arts bridge the word/image divide with a case study of Thackeray’s employment of the pictorial initial (the illustrations are his own) in *Vanity Fair* (1848). Elliott notes how the graphemes C and O, opening chapters 25 and 26 respectively, form a “picture frame for the pictorial elements of the initial”.<sup>32</sup> She



comments on how the grapheme, as a pictorial framing device, becomes the inferior component of the pictorial initial as, “[i]n a pictorial system, the frame is subservient to the picture” and, thus, the “prose is rendered subservient to illustration”.<sup>33</sup> Usefully for adaptation studies such an act undermines the prejudice of logophilia as the word can no longer be understood to be the superior form and, as Elliott summarises: “pictorial initials challenge not only traditional categorical distinctions but also postmodern figurations of word and image dynamics”.<sup>34</sup>

Early studies in adaptation criticism problematically, politically and theoretically speaking, privileged the novel as a superior medium of which the adaptation could only ever be an infantile imitation. Adaptation studies has moved beyond such issues, with theorists such as Stam and Elliott producing key criticism that has exposed and deconstructed the problematic perspectives that have privileged the source and promoted fidelity. While fidelity criticism has made a notable impact upon more recent attitudes towards the source novel, adaptation criticism has sought to move away from fidelity by theorising new approaches to adaptation, approaches which, in turn, have introduced additional problems.

### **Responding to the Fidelity Crisis**

In the seminal work *Novel to Film: an Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996) Brian McFarlane foregrounds the importance of considering adaptation as a “process” in order to move beyond fidelity criticism. McFarlane identified the need to recognise two distinct processes required to transpose the novel, “a wholly verbal sign system,” to film, which draws “variously, and sometimes simultaneously, on *visual*, *aural*, and *verbal* signifiers”.<sup>35</sup> In acknowledging and theorising the “process” of adaptation McFarlane provided the means to look beyond issues of fidelity and infidelity; by drawing upon formalism McFarlane provided the tools to consider *why* infidelities were present. McFarlane, employing Roland Barthes’ fundamental structuralist essay “Introduction to the the Structural Analysis of Narratives” (1966), distinguishes between two necessarily distinct treatments of novelistic elements in their transposition to film:



Broadly, a distinction has been made between those novelistic elements which can be *transferred* and those which require *adaptation proper*, the former essentially concerned with *narrative*, which functions irrespective of medium, and the latter with *enunciation*, which calls for consideration of two different signifying systems.<sup>36</sup>

Narrative and narration (the term I prefer to McFarlane's use of *enunciation*), then, each undergo the respective processes of *transference* and *adaptation proper*. McFarlane's distinctions provide a critical discourse which distinguishes between the differing processes underlying the intermedial relationship between source and adaptation. McFarlane notes the transposition of the novel's "wholly" verbal signifiers into the multiple signifying system of film, arguing that "we need to pay attention to all [film's] enunciatory strategies, not just the most obvious one of voice-over",<sup>37</sup> and in his analysis of *Cape Fear*, he notes how "those cinematic strategies of mise-en-scène, editing, and sound-track" present "an equivalent for the novel's discursive prose".<sup>38</sup> McFarlane's discussion of the processes of transposition, of examining the *transference* and *adaptation proper* of the novelistic elements, and of finding filmic equivalences for literary narration, is a critical development in adaptation studies and have proven a cornerstone for recent studies.<sup>39</sup>

McFarlane also introduces the issue of context to his examination of "the process of transposition from novel to film".<sup>40</sup> McFarlane determines that his study of adaptation is not concerned with "evaluating one in relation to the other but establishing the *kind* of relation a film might bear to the novel it is based on".<sup>41</sup> By considering formal differences as well as the differing contextual influences operating on the process of adaptation, such as "[c]onditions within the film industry and the prevailing cultural and social climate at the time of the film's making", McFarlane's interest is significantly distanced from his fidelity-oriented literary predecessors.<sup>42</sup>

Of particular interest to this study is McFarlane's objective: to examine and establish the *kind of relation* a film might bear to the novel in terms which move beyond fidelity criticism. I will return to McFarlane shortly, demonstrating how his theory of adaptation is a critical foundation to my own, not only for exploring the relationship between the source and the adaptation in detail, but for enabling the simultaneous consideration of what McFarlane terms those "other aspects of the film's intertextuality" alongside the source text.<sup>43</sup>



Sarah Cardwell, in her chapter entitled "Theory Revisited", offers the following summary of adaptation criticism's response to the fidelity prejudice and the privileging of the source novel.

There have been three paradigmatic approaches to adaptation that have marked out the terrain of adaptation studies ... . These approaches are: the medium-specific approach, the comparative approach and the pluralist approach.<sup>44</sup>

Cardwell's summation of adaptation criticism is particularly useful in that it demonstrates how the field has responded to the initial (highly problematic) issue of fidelity to the source. Cardwell describes in detail adaptation criticism's progression away from fidelity criticism, and as such presents an account that illustrates attitudes towards the source text which this thesis intends to redress.

The first approach, medium-specificity, recognises the impossibility of fidelity criticism's demands for a "faithful" adaptation due to formal and contextual differences in literary and filmic media and, in highlighting the differences between the media, provides a means for escaping logophilic hierarchies privileging the novel over the film, thus disrupting fidelity criticism by establishing the autonomy of the adaptation. However, in positing the novel and film as two fundamentally different media in which each's "unique nature gives rise to forms of artistic expression distinct from those in other media" medium-specificity renounces the possibility of the intermedial relationship from which the film adaptation is born.<sup>45</sup> For Cardwell, the medium-specific approach is flawed by its inability to separate form from content — if novels and films are two distinct forms and content is intrinsically linked to form then the content cannot be transferred from one medium to another and therefore, adaptation cannot exist. Kamilla Elliott, to whom I shall return, echoes Cardwell's sentiments, suggesting that the post-Saussurean theories which demand the fusion of form and content have forced adaptation critics to commit "semiotic heresy" unless they acknowledge and "treat adaptation as theoretical impossibility".<sup>46</sup>

The comparative approach, second in Cardwell's list, is an augmentation of the medium-specific approach, similarly concerned with effacing the spectre of fidelity criticism; it also sought to restore the intermedial relationship medium-specificity denied. The comparative approach to adaptation introduces the concept of adaptation as *process* and concerns itself with "*how* adaptation happens, [seeking] to explain equivalence in novel and film and to explain failures to attain



equivalence".<sup>47</sup> The work of McFarlane, as Elliott's comments below reaffirm, clearly fits into this category within Cardwell's schema. The comparative approach has its roots in narratological analyses of texts and addresses the way in which a "novel's narrative can be expressed through the use of different signs within a different sign-system", again by-passing the logophilic prejudices of simply "film cannot".<sup>48</sup> In doing so, the comparative approach incorporates elements of the medium-specific approach, but does so in a manner which recognises, rather than refuses, the intermedial relationship central to adaptation. Elliott describes these narratological approaches to adaptation as "the genetic concept of adaptation", noting how their distinction between "content (what is told) and ... form (how it is told)" is a critical development which foregrounds the theoretical "heresy" which the very act of adaptation commits and the medium-specific approach denies.<sup>49</sup>

The comparative approach is a useful one for demonstrating the formal relationship between novel and film without falling into those early prejudices but it does not provide the means to analyse the adaptation of style nor does it consider the additional texts and influences operating, and as such continues to produce a reductive reading of the film adaptation. It is the intention of this study to redress this by foregrounding the adaptation of style whilst also considering the role of intertextuality. Interestingly, Cardwell identifies McFarlane as a key component of the comparative approach but his acknowledgement of intertextuality in adaptation situates him beyond this formalist study of adaptation and, arguably, situates him within Cardwell's third category.

The pluralist approach, Cardwell's third and final mode of adaptation criticism, attempts to redress the absence of context and intertextuality; the latter is of particular importance to Cardwell who identifies it as a key component of adaptation. The pluralist approach seeks to redress the centrality of the source text in adaptation studies by asking, as Cardwell poses: "How else might we regard an adaptation, apart from as a text that draws upon a source novel?"<sup>50</sup> As the name suggests, this approach is concerned with examining the multiple sources influencing the adaptation, such as socio-political contexts and generic conventions, and not just the source novel which is more often than not ignored or situated on the periphery of a pluralist study. The pluralist approach draws upon "cultural studies and continental philosophy" to move beyond the novel-to-film based comparative approaches and considers an adaptation's "relation to other 'resources' such as other adaptations...; its institutional context...; and its particular historical, social



and cultural context".<sup>51</sup> Cardwell's own study situates the television adaptation of the classic novel firmly within the paradigms of its televisual context in order to demonstrate the necessity of contextualising the adaptation and the significance of intertextuality to the study of adaptation.

Cardwell's "three paradigmatic approaches to adaptation" provide a somewhat over-simplified illustration of the progression of adaptation studies away from its literary origins which favoured the novel and fidelity to it — for instance, the reduction of McFarlane to a comparative theorist despite his advocacy of the role of intertextuality. Critically, they demonstrate a rather alarming move which threatens to undermine the very existence of adaptation criticism in a similar vein to medium-specificity. Medium-specificity responded to fidelity criticism by effectively declaring it impossible; the pluralist approach has responded to the negation of intertextuality by making intertextuality its primary focus and, in turn, negating the source novel. It is the ability to highlight these problems which makes Cardwell's a useful summation for the purposes of this thesis as it foregrounds the concerns this study seeks to redress.

Christine Geraghty's *Now A Major Motion Picture* takes the pluralist approach to its extreme by all but foregoing the source text altogether; the moments when it is noted are limited to comments discussing its presence in marketing and in criticism. Whilst this is not a stance I altogether agree with, or wish to adopt, as the removal of the source text is, in effect, denying the relationship which brought the film about, I understand the need to define the film adaptation as something other, or more than, its relationship with the source text; it is, after all, a film and, as with other films, deserves to be analysed within this context as much as in terms of its literary heritage.

Geraghty does not negate the issue of adaptation, but rather than considering the relationship between adapted and adapting text she considers "how the fact of adaptation is referred to or used in the text; how references interact with other factors such as genre, editing, and acting; the reviewing context; assessing critical debates of key texts".<sup>52</sup> Geraghty notes how adaptations of canonical texts "offer a sense of being engaged with the reassuring durability of a classic", but pleasure is derived as much from experiencing "how the familiar is updated".<sup>53</sup> She notes how the audience's knowledge of an adaptation's origins is not exclusively derived from the original source, "but rather on the story being available



through a range of other sources including children's abridged versions, plays, comics, radio, musicals, as well as film and television".<sup>54</sup> In her 2006 study *A Theory of Adaptation* Linda Hutcheon similarly considers the issue of pleasure as being derived from repetition as she examines how an audience's knowledge of a source text may not be from direct experience, but indirectly, through various other adaptations. Geraghty also considers how the source text figures in adaptations of contemporary fiction which, she notes, similarly incorporate the source's author in their marketing, for instance, in *Cimarron* (1931) the source novel's author, Edna Ferber, featured alongside the film's leading actors in the film's marketing. The presence of the source novel's author in adaptation is a prominent feature of *The Hours*, as Virginia Woolf becomes a character within an adaptation of her novel, and is something I explore in chapter five.

In her analysis of art cinema's adaptations of modernist texts, Geraghty demonstrates how the film's director is as influential, authorially speaking, as the author whose work they adapt: "art cinema adds a possible second author, the director with his or her own markers of artistic style".<sup>55</sup> Geraghty's comments on how "the original author and the film director are brought in to a relationship that can shape how the film is interpreted" will be discussed in more detail in chapter four when I consider Gorris's film *Mrs. Dalloway*.<sup>56</sup> Geraghty's discussion of the role of the author, whether as a marketing device or in a more dialogic, intertextual capacity is one which I intend to explore. In her conclusion Geraghty notes:

Adaptations layer one kind of author over another; more than other films, they equate meaning with authorial intention, but in doing so they also set the author in the context of a many-layered construction.<sup>57</sup>

The discussion of layering in the adaptation is not a new one, as I shall discuss later, however, the notion of layering authors as opposed to texts is an interesting one which enables us to consider the role of the author in adaptation in a manner which moves beyond fidelity. In chapter 5 I shall consider Geraghty's comment through my analysis of Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* and how the figure of Woolf haunts the novel and its film adaptation, not simply through her central role in one of its three narratives, but through the presence of other Woolf intertexts and through the employment of stylistic imitation.

Geraghty outlines the object of her study as generating a more open approach to adaptation, one which, in departing from a comparative methodology,



“involves a more flexible approach to the concept of adaptation” which considers “that the most important thing about an adaptation might precisely not be its adaptation status”.<sup>58</sup> Concluding her study Geraghty comments:

The complex textual referencing of many adaptations, their layering of genres, performances, and setting, provides evidence for how they work as films, not as versions of another form, nor a swirl of references without their own shape. The worth of the more film-centered and open approach I have outlined here must lie with the analyses of the individual films that have formed the basis of this study.<sup>59</sup>

Whilst Geraghty’s study produces an in-depth analysis of the multiple film-centred influences acting upon adaptation she has, quite consciously, neglected the very thing that makes an adaptation an adaptation. If medium-specificity threatened adaptation criticism through its denial of the relationship between source and adaptation, then a “pluralist approach” presents the risk of removing the source altogether. It is the intention of this study to address this imbalance by considering both the role of the source novel and the role of intertextuality, exploring new avenues such as the notion of a stylistic relationship between source and adaptation, and to open up the study on intertextuality to include texts written by and/or about the source’s author and those non-textual intertexts such as cultural icons like the figure of the hysteric.

## **Consequences and Implications of “Dumbing-Down” the Role of the Source Novel**

*There are many kinds of relations which may exist between film and literature,  
and fidelity is only one — and rarely the most exciting.*

McFarlane, *Novel to Film* (1996) p. 11.

### **How does Ousting the Source Novel Affect Adaptation Criticism? Can it Exist Without it?**

Adaptation criticism, then, has seen an increasing level of interest in those “many kinds of relations” which do not focus upon a comparative relationship between source text and adaptation. “Ousting” the source novel from the equation



has allowed adaptation criticism to theorise the impact of other anterior influences ranging from cultural debates to generic conventions to modes of production.

In *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999) Whelehan foregrounds the collection's concern as one which "further destabilizes [sic] the tendency to believe that the origin text is of primary importance",<sup>60</sup> and moves adaptation criticism towards "[a] cultural studies approach [that] foregrounds the activities of reception and consumption".<sup>61</sup> Essays included discuss a broad range of adapted texts ranging from Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993) to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) to Dodie Smith's *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1956). Esther Sonnet's essay "From *Emma* to *Clueless*: Taste, Pleasure and the Scene of History" examines how an awareness of Austen's *Emma* (1816), or "the literary parallel" as she terms it, has an effect on "reading a film whose pleasures are evidently produced out of the 'low' cultural intertexts of *Beverly Hills 90210* and the teenpic [sic] films".<sup>62</sup> Sonnet notes how the film's intertextuality draws upon high culture to play upon its pre-determined position as a dumbed-down, popular, and therefore "low-brow", version of its canonical source. Thus, she explains, "*Clueless* generates real humour from an audacious undervaluing of the social culture".<sup>63</sup> Sonnet's pluralist approach barely touches upon the relationship between source and adaptation other than in the dual plot synopsis which opens the essay. By shifting the focus away from the source novel, Sonnet is able to introduce other theoretical considerations which previous fidelity-based, medium-specific, and narratological comparative practices could not.

For Cardwell, the pluralist approach neglected "questions of aesthetic and generic development" in favour of concentrating on "questions of ideology"; thus, with its focus on the socio-political and the cultural the pluralist approach fails to utilise the "range of possibilities opened up by a non-comparative approach" and remains "lacking".<sup>64</sup> Cardwell, whose study is heavily influenced by her pluralist forerunners, seeks to redress this imbalance by considering the influence of generic context, specifically questions of genre and televisual aesthetics, tracing the development of the television adaptation through four detailed case studies. In order to do so Cardwell proposes a "non-comparative, 'generic' approach" to the film adaptation, which is analogous to Darwinian evolution and draws upon no-



tions of genetic variation in order to demonstrate “an understanding of the television classic-novel adaptation that recognises the importance of its televisual context”.<sup>65</sup> Cardwell determines to historicise adaptation criticism by examining an adaptation’s relationship to earlier adaptations, situating the adaptation within a “specific ‘locus’” (that of television for Cardwell’s study).<sup>66</sup>

Cardwell’s is a linear model of adaptation, one which specifically rejects a “centre-based conceptualisation of adaptation, which posits a direct relationship between the original source ... and each new adaptation”.<sup>67</sup> For Cardwell, the centre-based model, in focusing entirely on the relationship between the centralised source and peripheral adaptation(s), denies any relationship between the adaptations, whereas her linear model determines that any adaptation is intrinsically linked to other, earlier adaptations, each evolving from the other. Cardwell conceptualises “[s]ubsequent adaptations as points on a continuum, as part of [an] extended development of a singular, infinite meta-text: a valuable story or myth that is constantly growing and developing, being retold, reinterpreted and reassessed”.<sup>68</sup> The adaptations, then, become recent additions to the meta-text and, more significantly, the adaptations’ source is not the origin of the ‘valuable story or myth’ which is being retold. Rather, the origin is something much less tangible, something “neither definite or finite, ... only postulated or implied”, whose earliest tellings were, could only ever be, oral: the ur-text.<sup>69</sup> Introducing the ur-text, the primordial and, therefore, non-source-able text, enables Cardwell to fully disrupt the novel-to-film comparative approach which has dominated adaptation criticism; as she says: “it is hard to assess how faithful a text is to something that does not materially exist”.<sup>70</sup>

Cardwell’s employment of the ur-text to bring into question the notion of the “original” text is a useful one, but it is problematic. In this study I have selected a source novel which successfully exposes the fallibility of the “original” in a manner which neither denies the value of the source, nor the value of the adaptation(s). Woolf’s novel was originally two individual pieces of fiction, a short story about the prime minister featuring Septimus Smith, and a proposed novel entitled *The Hours* which, in turn, she developed from a short story called “Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street”, published in 1923. The “origin” of *Mrs. Dalloway* is not a singular one, but a weaving of two separate narratives, thus disrupting the presupposed transcendental nature of the source. These two strands of *Mrs Dalloway*’s origins



are further multiplied when one recalls the appearance of the newly-married couple, Richard and Clarissa Dalloway in Woolf's 1919 novel *The Voyage Out*. In her introduction to *Mrs Dalloway's Party* Stella McNichol writes: "Virginia Woolf is not repeating herself; she is moving deeper into the Dalloway world, the society world, in order to fathom its power and question its values."<sup>71</sup> The collection, compiled by McNichol, features seven of Woolf's short stories written between 1922 and 1927, which, she states, "form a related group in that they relate to each other thematically: the social theme and the subject of the party and the actual or implied presence of Mrs. Dalloway give a unity to them".<sup>72</sup> For McNichol, the stories were conceived by Woolf as being: "either as parts of the novel itself, later to be rejected and to swim free as independent stories; or as alternative parallel expressions of Virginia Woolf's ideas."<sup>73</sup> Therefore the collection, described as "a kind of writer's notebook", suggests a text which is both born out of the weaving of two narratives and has, itself, woven additional, peripheral tales: *Mrs Dalloway* was, before any additional authors attempted to weave their variation, already at the centre of a textual web created by Woolf herself. Thus, there can be no "original" with which the study of the relationship between source and adaptation can be tainted: with no original the question of inferior copies, or of fidelity, becomes not simply futile, but impossible.

Cardwell's theory of adaptation as a linear continuum, or meta-text, allows us to recognise the value of looking beyond the novel-to-film relationship to other relationships, notably those between adaptations. Cardwell, and the pluralist theorists whose approach she seeks to augment, choose to move beyond the source novel and focus upon two (intertwining) issues: contextuality and intertextuality. Brian McFarlane highlighted how the "insistence on fidelity" not only "fail[ed] to take into serious account what may be transferred from novel to film as distinct from what will require more complex processes of adaptation", it also "marginalise[d] those production determinants which have nothing to do with the novel but may be powerfully influential upon the film".<sup>74</sup> However, Cardwell and those who have adopted the pluralist approach have, problematically, *marginalised* the very thing that has a powerful contributory role to the adaptation: the source novel. It is possible and necessary, as this study will demonstrate, to include the source within adaptation studies without compromising the issues of contextuality and intertextuality. Rather, I will highlight how they are intrinsically linked, associated



within a complex web of intertextuality in which relationships are not limited to a linear continuum, but are open to limitless connections operating in all directions.

### Theorising “Adaptation As Adaptation”<sup>75</sup>

Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* is explicitly concerned with theorising “adaptations as adaptations” without reducing adaptation to a series of comparative case studies in which she examines how influential an adaptation’s relationship to the prior text may be.

Although adaptations are also aesthetic objects in their own right, it is only as inherently double or multi-laminated works that they can be theorized as adaptations.<sup>76</sup>

Hutcheon is not denying an adaptation’s ability to stand as an autonomous work, rather, she is positing that any theory of adaptation cannot afford to deny that an adaptation has a relationship, or relationships, with prior text(s) and that it is these palimpsestuous relationships, how they function formally, creatively, interpretatively, and how they are read that is critical to the study and theorising of adaptation. Hutcheon proposes a new approach to adaptation, as she explains in her preface: “Because we use the word adaptation to refer to both a product and a process of creation and reception, this suggests to me the need for a theoretical perspective that is at once formal and ‘experiential.’”<sup>77</sup> Hutcheon’s study foregrounds considering the “adaptation as adaptation” and questions how this impacts upon both the processes of its creation and its reception. Hutcheon examines “the *what, who, why, how, when, and where* of adaptation”<sup>78</sup> in order to theorise adaptation first, as a product; second, as “an interpretive and a creative act”;<sup>79</sup> and, third, as an experience in which pleasure is found in “repetition without replication”.<sup>80</sup> Hutcheon’s study proposes that adaptation is not a linear act, or reading, but a lateral one which refutes privileging the source, or as she prefers, the adapted text, simply because it appeared first:

we may actually read or see that so-called original after we have experienced the adaptation, thereby challenging the authority of any notion of priority. Multiple versions exist laterally, not vertically.<sup>81</sup>

In specifying that the consumers may experience the adapting text and not the adapted text, the source, first, Hutcheon is able to both disrupt logophilic tendencies which have designated any adaptation as a secondary, inferior product, but,



of equal importance, she has inserted the audience, or reader, firmly into the construction of an adaptation's meaning. Inserting the reader, the consumer, firmly into her theory of adaptation Hutcheon is drawing upon poststructuralism and Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, which I shall return to discuss in more detail shortly. One key element of Hutcheon's study is her consideration of why adaptation continues, in spite of critical denigration, to be so popular, with both adapters and consumers. Theorising how audiences take pleasure in "repetition with variation", affords Hutcheon with a new, non-comparative perspective with which to view adaptation, one which considers, but is not precluded by, the adaptation's relationship with the source text(s). It is the palimpsestic nature of this textual layering, allowing one text to be read, or seen, in another, that defines "adaptation as *adaptation*" for Hutcheon.

Hutcheon concludes by considering adaptation as part of a textual continuum "a continuum of fluid relationships between prior works and later—and lateral—revisitations of them".<sup>82</sup> She argues that:

A continuum model has the advantage of offering a way to think about various responses to a prior story; it positions adaptations specifically as (re-)interpretations and (re-) creations.<sup>83</sup>

It is "the palimpsestic pleasures of doubled experience", of experiencing that which is known yet different, of "embed[ing] difference in similarity", which Hutcheon suggests propels adaptation.<sup>84</sup>

Drawing upon Richard Dawkins' theory of memes Hutcheon, in an act of adaptation, considers adaptation as a cultural equivalent of Darwinian (biological) adaptation. Dawkins, Hutcheon explains, "bravely suggested the existence of a cultural parallel to Darwin's biological theory", positing that 'memes' are "units of cultural transmission or units of imitation", adding that "when memes are transmitted, they always change" in order to survive.<sup>85</sup> Hutcheon's adaptation of Dawkins' adaptation of Darwin's theory of evolution, or biological adaptation, is a succinct example of how adaptation is analogous to biological adaptation — the strongest, most favoured stories get retold:



Natural selection is both conservative and dynamic; it involves both stabilizing and mutating. In short, it is all about propagating genes into future generations, identical in part, yet different. So too with cultural selection in the form of narrative adaptation—defined as theme and variation, repetition with modification.<sup>86</sup>

Whilst the genetic analogy is not an original one, (Cardwell approaches it in *Adaptation Revisited*) Hutcheon's employment of Dawkins' theory of memes as cultural units equivalent to genes situates the biological analogy within the sphere of cultural studies whilst firmly differentiating from genetic:

Memes are not high-fidelity replicators: they change with time, for meme transmission is subject to constant mutation. Stories too propagate themselves when they catch on; adaptations—as both repetition and variation—are their form of replication. Evolving by cultural selection, traveling stories adapt to local cultures, just as populations of organisms adapt to local environments.<sup>87</sup>

As she succinctly concludes: “adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places”.<sup>88</sup> In asking, *what, who, why, how, when, and where*, and in exploring adaptation across media as a product, a process of creation and a process of reception, Hutcheon has augmented the genetic model of adaptation, and theorised adaptation in a manner that recognises its palimpsestuous nature. It is necessary to recognise, as Hutcheon does, adaptation *as adaptation* and, equally, consider adaptation as a palimpsestuous web. I will now turn to Kristeva and Genette as I examine the theories of intertextuality that influence my understanding of the role intertextuality plays within adaptation studies.

## **Intertextuality: the Roots**

Intertextuality is not only a key element of adaptation studies, some theories of intertextuality help us understand the palimpsestuous nature of adaptation. Gérard Genette's work in *Palimpsests* (1982 [trans. 1997]) is useful for my own stylistic reading of the source-adaptation relationship, as foregrounded by Robert Stam in his introduction to *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, and I shall examine Genette in detail shortly. However, it is an oft-cited quotation from Kristeva's *Semiotiké* (1969), in the essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel”, to which I now turn, in order to open up my exploration of intertextuality: “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the ab-



sorption and transformation of another".<sup>89</sup> Drawing upon Bahktinian dialogism, Kristeva suggested that the literary word be conceived as "an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of writer, the addressee (of the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context".<sup>90</sup> It is this notion of an intersection or dialogue that is pertinent to this study – what other "text" could illustrate this notion than that which foregrounds (at least) one of its *textual surfaces*? The literary lineage of *Mrs Dalloway* foregrounds this textual dialogue or, as Kristeva explains of Bakhtin: "When he speaks of 'two paths merging within the narrative', Bakhtin considers writing as reading of the anterior literary corpus and the text as an absorption of and a reply to another text."<sup>91</sup> *Mrs Dalloway* is already an absorption of another text, or texts, written by Woolf whereas *The Hours* is, quite clearly, both an absorption of and a reply to *Mrs Dalloway* and, as I shall discuss in chapter five, other anterior texts.

Kristeva, whilst coining the phrase intertextuality, was not primarily concerned with elaborating upon its function and was more interested in reinserting the speaking subject into the study of semiotics. It is to Genette and his theories of transtextuality that I turn to further my own discussion of intertextuality.

### Genette and Transtextuality

*Palimpsests* is Genette's study of what he terms the "transtextual relationship",<sup>92</sup> which, as Gerald Prince explains in his foreword to the English translation, is any text's "textual links with other texts".<sup>93</sup> Genette identifies five modes of transtextual relationships: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality. It is the fourth mode, hypertextuality, which is of primary concern to Genette, and to this study, but it is pertinent to summarise the other four modes of transtextuality before focusing on hypertextuality.

The first form, termed "intertextuality," specifies the "copresence" of one text in another in the form of quotation, whether acknowledged, plagiarised, or allusion.<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, Mary Orr observes of Genette's re-delegation of Kristeva's term to the "micro-levels of 'allusion' or 'quotation' in a new work":

By attending least to this category, Genette performs a double negation: he dismisses the 'authority' of Kristeva's intention of the term, and 'authority' modes marked by speech marks, whether explicit (quotation) or implicit (allusion). By doing so, Genette also avoids hermeneutics and authorial intentions, yet, second, can redirect



Kristeva's term more strategically, its 'strict' relevance to poetics (poetry and narratology).<sup>95</sup>

It should be noted that other than during my current discussion of Genette's theory of transtextuality I will be employing the term intertextuality in the form that is currently favoured within adaptation criticism, and not in Genette's "more restrictive sense".<sup>96</sup>

Genette defines paratextuality as those "secondary signals" such as titles, footnotes, forewords, appendices, book covers, etc. which, whether "autographic or allographic", situate the text within "a (variable) setting and sometimes [function as] a commentary".<sup>97</sup> Metatextuality is "most often labelled 'commentary'" and refers to the relationship between a text and those other texts which make a critical reference to it, the most notable being reviews and literary criticism.<sup>98</sup> Architextuality denotes a text's form or genre, such as the sub-titles of "a novel" or "a romance", and is "articulated at most only by paratextual mention ... [and is] of a purely taxonomic nature".<sup>99</sup>

Hypertextuality, of primary interest for Genette and myself, is concerned with the manifestation of one text into another, or, in other words, it is concerned with adaptation. Genette explains:

By hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not of commentary. ... To view things differently, let us posit the general notion of a text in the second degree ...: i.e., a text derived from another preexistent text.<sup>100</sup>

Genette's analogy of hypertextuality as literature in the *second degree* is a particularly useful one when seeking to move beyond issues of fidelity and the word/image debates highlighted by Elliott's study, as it actively distances the *hypertext* (the adaptation) from its *hypotext* (the source) so as not to deny their relationship. The analogy suggests the hypertext is two degrees, or steps, away from the latter — but the very fact that the one is "two degrees" from the other maintains their relativity. The notion of two degrees also relates to how the *hypertext* is at an angle to its original, creating a refraction, or, an alternative perspective much like how a prism refracts light, altering its trajectory. The *hypertext* therefore can be seen to morph its *hypotext* and the hypertextual relationship is clearly one which results in a change of a direction, a new telling as it were. This is echoed by McFarlane's examination of how shifts in ideological context influence adaptation. Literature



in the second degree is analogous not simply for issues of medium-specificity, but notions of context.

Genette notes this idea of a transformative relationship for himself, expanding upon the idea to introduce two ways in which the hypertext may adapt its hypotext:

What I call hypertext, then, is any text derived from a previous text either through simple transformation, which I shall call from now on *transformation*, or through indirect transformations, which I shall label *imitation*.<sup>101</sup>

*Transformation*, generally speaking, involves the transposition of “action”, narrative, from the hypotext to the hypertext; whereas, *imitation*, “that specific quality”, in which style is the basis of the hypertextual relationship (such as, in this study, Woolf’s style of rhetoric).<sup>102</sup> Genette illustrates the difference between hypertextual transformation and imitation by drawing upon two contrasting hypertexts of Homer’s *Odyssey*: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is deemed a transformation as it takes “a pattern of actions and relationships”, which is then treated “in a different style;” whereas Virgil’s *Aeneid* “appropriates [Homer’s] certain style, which [Virgil] applies to a different action”.<sup>103</sup> Genette’s theory allows for a discussion of both narrative and style, and it is his theory of imitation which is key to my theory of adaptation, which, as I shall demonstrate, augments McFarlane through a detailed consideration of style, a rhetorical relationship.

In addition to Genette’s identification of two hypertextual relationships, transformation and imitation, there are three “functions”, or modes, of the hypertext: *playful*, *satirical*, and *serious*. These functions address what can be best described as the tone of the relationship, in other words how the hypertext functions in relation to its hypotext. For instance, a satirical hypertextual relationship is one of mockery, in which the hypertext seeks to “debase” or degrade the hypotext. Genette creates six hypertextual “genres”, each a combination of the adaptive relationship and the function. The six are: *parody*, a playful transformation; *travesty*, a satirical transformation; *transposition*, a serious transformation; *pastiche*, a playful imitation; *caricature*, a satirical imitation; and finally, *forgery*, a serious imitation.

Of particular significance to this study are Genette’s three imitative hypertextual genres, pastiche, caricature, and forgery, which replicate the style of the hypotext, and not the content. Pastiche, quite simply, refers “to the imitation of style



without any satirical intent", and caricature, or "satirical pastiche", denotes how the hypotext "is ridiculed via a process of exaggerations and stylistic magnifications".<sup>104</sup> Forgery, finally, is tied into the idea of the hypertext as "continuation ... an imitation with a partially prescribed subject", and may be most readily exemplified with the allographic "sequels" such as Emma Tenant's *Pemberley: Or Pride and Prejudice Continued* (1993) which is a proposed "continuation" of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), as its paratexts highlight.<sup>105</sup>

It is Genette's distinction between hypertextual transformation and imitation which is of particular interest to this study. Genette's six genres, whilst presenting a comprehensive illustration of his theory of hypertextuality, are simply another means of categorisation, and as we can see with the work of Geoffrey Wagner, a strict adherence to the categorisation of adaptation has not enabled the field to move beyond fidelity criticism. Categories are also inherently problematic as they rarely hold firm and are frequently subject to interrogation and deconstruction. Seymour Chatman's essay "*Mrs Dalloway's Progeny: The Hours as Second-degree Narrative*" (2005) demonstrates such slippage of categorical terms as he exclaims: "If it does nothing else, Genette's taxonomy usefully clarifies what *The Hours* is not."<sup>106</sup> Chatman notes how the adaptation cannot exclusively be determined as either pastiche or forgery, exhibiting elements of both the "playful" and entertaining imitation and the "serious" imitation, as I shall discuss in chapter five. For Chatman, *The Hours* is best read as a "serious transformation" because "it makes a new whole with its original, not merely allusively but formatively", adding that "*The Hours* fits into [Genette's] category of [serious transformation] because it presupposes its readers' familiarity with *Mrs Dalloway* and also their tacit agreement that the structure and style of the original permit an alternative sexual ethos."<sup>107</sup> I will return to the complexities of applying Genette to *The Hours* in the fifth chapter, for now I wish to discuss his theory of *stylistic imitation*.

In this study I wish to present a model through which we can understand the adaptive relationship in terms other than fidelity to the source novel. I also wish to move beyond the linear novel-film relationship and consider additional textual relationships which influence and/or operate in conjunction with that between source novel and film adaptation. One way in which my approach to adaptation reinforces the relationship between novel and film is to consider what Genette terms *stylistic imitation*, and how the film demonstrates a mimetic relationship



with the novel's rhetoric or style. In doing so I hope to move beyond those logophilic prejudices which limited early studies of the film adaptation and allow the field to return to exploring the adaptive relationship without fear of closing down their critical approach.

Genette's theory of *stylistic imitation* makes explicit how the link between hypotext and hypertext is dependent on "specific stylistic and thematic features".<sup>108</sup> Imitation involves identifying and employing a text's idiolect as a model with which to write another text. Imitation, therefore, is a *mimetic performance*, an act whose function may be one of three modes identified by Genette: "entertainment" (pastiche); "derision" (caricature); and, continuation, or "extension" (forgery).<sup>109</sup>

Genette introduces *stylistic imitation* whilst addressing the satirical pastiche (that which he terms caricature, or satirical imitation), a hypertextual genre that seeks to debase or mock the hypotext by imitating its style. One may consider the performances of impersonators who ridicule by imitation as exemplifying this form of hypertextuality. This specific form of hypertextuality is described as:

a stylistic imitation aiming to critique ... or ridicule, an aim which ... is enunciated in the very style that it targets (*cacophony*) but remains for the most part implicit, leaving the reader to infer the parody from the caricatural features of the imitation.<sup>110</sup>

This particular mode of stylistic imitation is, as I shall discuss in further detail in chapter 2, adopted by Woolf in her essay "Modern Fiction" as she critiques the writings of H.G. Wells, Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennett (the latter being the continued subject of her satirical derision) through stylistic imitation. However, it is important to note that imitation is not necessarily satirical, it may also be "playful" (pastiche) or "serious" (forgery) to adopt Genette's schema — although these distinctions are not so readily distinguishable, as Genette notes, but fluid: Genette expresses this by employing dotted lines rather than full ones to divide the functions or modes (playful/satirical/serious) in his table of hypertextual categories.<sup>111</sup> What is particularly interesting in the above quotation is the notion of imitation being implicit, a move that (re)positions the reader as having a vital role in the construction of meaning. The (re)positioning of the reader debunks the authority of the author, also evident in Kristeva's work, which has pertinence for the study of an author who is continually inserted into her fiction and subsequent adaptations, as I shall return to below when examining Elliott's "de(re)composing" concept of adaptation.



# Reclaiming the Source Novel: Why it is of Value to Adaptation Criticism Today

## (Re)Evaluating the Source

Adaptation criticism has, as I have discussed above, moved beyond the problematic issue of fidelity criticism. However, whilst it is no longer dominated by a concern with “faithfulness to the source” the issue of fidelity continues to haunt the study of adaptation. It is not the aim of this thesis to address the problems of fidelity criticism, for these have been effectively dealt with by, amongst others, Stam, Elliott, Cardwell and McFarlane, but it is my intention to redress the precarious positioning of the source text within adaptation studies.

Recent studies such as Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation*, which I explored above, have examined adaptation as *adaptation*. Theorising the adaptation as palimpsest has foregrounded the role of intertextuality in adaptation, categorising the source text as one of a multitude of intertexts. In *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) Julie Sanders, echoing Hutcheon, determines that part of the pleasure of adaptation is its palimpsestous nature: “The pleasure exists, and persists, then in the act of reading in, around, and on (and on).”<sup>112</sup> For Sanders, it is imperative that adaptation criticism eschews a linear epistemology and adopts a pluralist approach; she argues that “it is surely important to acknowledge that to tie an adaptive and appropriative text to one sole intertext may in fact close down the opportunity to read it in relationship with others”.<sup>113</sup> Whilst the source text does, indeed, qualify as an intertext the nature of its intertextual relationship requires additional understanding. Contrary to Sanders, I wish to demarcate it as having a different intertextual relationship with the adaptation than other intertexts. The source text, and I continue to use this term despite Hutcheon’s arguments against using such a politically charged term, has a distinct relationship with the adaptation, different to its relationship with other intertexts. The source text is more than an intertext as it is its textual relationship with the adaptation that defines the adaptation as *adaptation* and, more often than not, it is the source text that inspired the creation of the adaptation in the first place.<sup>114</sup>

In naming the source text the adapted text Hutcheon demarcates the special intertextual relationship I am affording the source novel over other intertexts. It is, as Sanders states, the “act of reading in, around, and on (and on)” which affords



pleasure that makes adaptation special. However, to determine the adaptive relationship to be special, or more significant, is far from suggesting we fall back into the pitfalls of early fidelity criticism and negate other intertextual influences. It is my suggestion that reading adaptation must negotiate a fine balancing act of considering the relationship that defines adaptation as *adaptation* without defining any adaptation solely in terms of its relationship with the source. In distinguishing between source and intertext I am not proposing, as the above quotation from Sanders implies, to return to an approach to reading adaptation that closes down the opportunity to read the adaptation in relation to other texts. Rather, as I shall demonstrate in this thesis, considering the source text's relationship with the adaptation in detail actually opens the way to read and consider a broad range of other intertextual relationships. It is my intention to broaden, not restrict, the range of (inter)textual relationships operating within (and without) the adaptation. My model, like the genetic models proposed by Cardwell and Hutcheon, is one which seeks to identify and celebrate the adaptation's many textual relationships and it is my specific approach to the source text that inhibits the denial or negation of the adaptation's relationships with, for instance, other adaptations or other texts. I will develop the genetic approach to adaptation and, as Hutcheon and Sanders determine, escape a linear epistemology in favour of something less foreclosed, a model that allows us to read forwards, backwards, and across, a model which, as I noted earlier, incorporates both the central and linear models described by Cardwell, one which Sanders touches upon when she considers how "perhaps, the real answer lies in the image of circularity".<sup>115</sup>

In an act of adaptation, I shall now appropriate Sanders' own theoretical distinction between adaptation and appropriation to reinforce my own segregation of source text and intertext. Sanders posits that both adaptation and appropriation are forms of intertextuality, that both are modes of intertextual relationships. One marked distinction between an adaptation and an appropriation for Sanders is the manner in which the intertextual relationship(s) are presented: adaptation overtly presents its relationship whilst appropriation is covert. The adapted intertext, the source text, is, in the main, foregrounded by the adaptation, whereas the appropriated text's presence is inferred within the text; in other words, it is up to the reader to discern the intertext. This distinction between literary adaptation and literary appropriation provides a means of distinguishing between the source text,



the adapted text, and other intertexts whose presence, to employ Sanders on appropriation, "can be wholly more shadowy".<sup>116</sup> Now, I am not suggesting that appropriation can be reduced to what is more commonly understood as intertextual allusion, but the distinction between overt and covert presence is a useful starting point for differentiating between source text and intertext. For, as Sanders notes: "The relationship between intertexts and the referential process alters in significance when the appropriation extends beyond fragmentary allusion to a more sustained reworking and revision."<sup>117</sup> The source text, as Hutcheon's theorising adaptation as *adaptation* foregrounds, has a central role in the construction of the adaptation, but it is not the only intertextual relationship within what Sanders refers to as "intertextual webs or signifying fields".<sup>118</sup> It is this notion of "webs or networks of allusion and (mutual) influence" that I wish to augment.<sup>119</sup>

### **An Alternative Overview of Adaptation Criticism**

In *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* Kamilla Elliott precedes her own theory of "adaptation by analogy", to which I shall return, with an alternative to Cardwell's overview of adaptation criticism. Elliott proposes six concepts of adaptation, including the genetic concept noted above, that "split form from content in various ways to account for the process of adaptation".<sup>120</sup> Elliott's six concepts, which are "operative in practice and criticism", develop McFarlane's discussion of the *kind of relation* between source and adaptation and consist of: the genetic, the psychic, the ventriloquist, the trumping, the incarnational and the de(re)composing concept.<sup>121</sup> Whilst this study is not overtly concerned with such notions of theoretical heresies the concepts proposed by Elliott raise issues pertinent to this study of adaptation and the reconsideration of the value of the source text.

Elliott's psychic concept of adaptation is intrinsically tied up with authorial intention as it demands fidelity to the "spirit of a text", that which is "commonly equated with the spirit or personality of the author".<sup>122</sup> Neil Sinyard's comment that "fidelity [is] not to the letter of the source but to the spirit" is suggestive of the psychic concept and presents the possibility to take adaptation criticism beyond formalism and earlier forms of fidelity criticism by alluding to something more than a comparison of retained narrative components, as this study intends to illustrate.<sup>123</sup> Elliott notes how there is "a fusion of textual and authorial identities" as the spirit of the text is, in effect, little more than issues of authorship and



authorial intention.<sup>124</sup> This insertion of the author into adaptation criticism is something I shall discuss in more detail in chapter two. Critically, and with particular relevance for my analysis of Daldry's *The Hours* and its critical reception by Woolf scholars, Elliott determines how "the textual 'spirit' is defined and mediated by literary critics".<sup>125</sup> The influence of anterior, critical sources on the study of the adaptation is one which Gérard Genette's theory of transtextuality notes, and is one which, alongside Elliott, informs my own reading of the influence of intertextuality on adaptation. In this instance, as Elliott suggests, adaptation is authenticated by the literary author, or those academic scholars who are equally able to add authenticity "in the name of authorial spirit or intent".<sup>126</sup>

Elliott's ventriloquist concept of adaptation is paired with the psychic concept; they are "inseparable sides of the same coin", in that both concepts deal with the transference of meaning that is "a nebulous spirit that can enter and leave forms".<sup>127</sup> Whereas the psychic meaning is tied up with the idea of "spirit", the ventriloquist model, as the name suggests, deals with the idea of the adaptation giving voice (or life) to the silent ("corpse") that is the novel. In this concept of adaptation, again splitting form from content, the film adaptation is posited as semiotically enriching the source, strictly opposing the normative critique of impoverishment.

The incarnational concept posits the film adaptation as completing what the novel began, as making it whole or, "a more total representation".<sup>128</sup> An incarnational conceptualisation of adaptation positions the film adaptation as being concerned with form, not content, and the process of "matching signifier with signifier".<sup>129</sup> This concern with form, and not content, echoes this study's intention to consider how Genette's theory of *stylistic imitation* can facilitate a less restrictive approach to the relationship between source and adaptation. Elliott draws upon Walter Pater's theorising of interart analogies to illustrate the incarnational concept, arguing that for Pater: "interart analogies press toward adaptation of form rather than of content: the arts do not aspire to re-represent the content of other arts, only their forms."<sup>130</sup> Therefore, the incarnational concept "is not a process of matching signifier with signified, but rather a signifier with a signifier".<sup>131</sup> In that the incarnational concept is concerned with signifiers, as opposed to the signified, we can see it bears some similarities to the approach I am proposing in which style is privileged over narrative. In chapter three I will discuss how Marleen Gor-



ris' adaptation develops a stylistic relationship, whilst in chapter five, my analysis of Daldry's *The Hours* focuses on how the film seeks to "match signifier with signifier" as it adapts Woolf's literary impressionism to the film, matching a calm and peaceful description of suicide with the film's critically vilified serene representation of Mrs Woolf's suicide.

The trumping concept, or adaptation as criticism, involves an "infidelity" to a source text, but in a manner less criticised than formal infidelities. Elliott explains that whilst adaptations of the Victorian novel "pursue a hyperfidelity to nineteenth-century material culture, they reject and correct Victorian psychology, ethics, and politics".<sup>132</sup> The adaptation's "hyperfidelity" may even "correct" the source novel's own anachronisms, such as inaccurate costume details. Adaptation as criticism may also adapt contemporary literary criticism of the source in its adaptation of said source, for instance, Elliott cites Patricia Rozema's incorporation of twentieth-century feminist post-colonial criticism of Austen's novel into her adaptation of *Mansfield Park*. *The Hours* also functions in a manner similar to that of Rozema's *Mansfield Park*, as both novel and film exhibit a conscious uptake of contemporary literary criticism of *Mrs Dalloway*. In the fifth chapter I look at how literary criticism of *Mrs Dalloway* and its increasing preoccupation with homosexuality in the novel have been adapted in *The Hours* so that its twentieth-century version of Clarissa Dalloway is a lesbian. The chapter will also explore how critical accusations of biographical inaccuracies rallied against Daldry's *The Hours* have resulted in a blinkered, reductive reading of the film adaptation as "hyperfidelity" to material accuracy such as costume and interior decor dominates. I will explore how these iconophobic prejudices allow such anachronisms to be overlooked in Cunningham's novel.

The genetic concept, as discussed earlier, is paired with the de(re)composing concept of adaptation, the former eschewing the subjectivity the latter embraces. Elliott describes it as follows:

Under the de(re)composing concept of adaptation, novel and film decompose, merge, and form a new composition at 'underground' levels of reading. The adaptation is a composite of textual and filmic signs merging in audience consciousness together with other cultural narratives and often leads to confusion as to which is novel and which is film.<sup>133</sup>

Critical, for this study, is the discussion of both "audience consciousness" and "other cultural narratives" and how the various elements are merged. This con-



cept, with its deconstructive approach, enables a more positive and inclusive approach to adaptation in spite of the critical reception adaptations of this nature often receive. For Elliott, those adaptations that exhibit the de(re)composing concept are frequently dismissed or “condemned as unfaithful” for their exclusion of elements of the novel but, she argues, should the critics read “from novel-to-film and then from film-to-novel”, as opposed to the dominant novel-to-film approach, the “alleged infidelities ... represent rejections of certain parts of the novel in favour of others, not total departures”.<sup>134</sup> The deconstructive nature of this model allows for different adaptations to foreground different elements or “fragments” of the source as, argues Elliott, it “allows for other mergers of social context and literary context”:<sup>135</sup> for instance, *The Hours* deconstructs Septimus’s storyline, it retains the madness which drives his social exclusion and his suicide, yet it changes the politics as shell-shock is morphed into the contemporary AIDs pandemic. The de(re)composing concept encourages an approach to adaptation much like the one I am proposing here in it that it enables an exploration of the source-adaptation relationship which opens up adaptation criticism to multiple readings rather than closing it down altogether.

Pertinent to this study, the de(re)composing concept, in a more positive manner than the psychic concept, introduces additional, anterior influences which enable a consideration of the author without resulting in prejudiced or closed readings of the adaptation. In discussing “audience consciousness” and “other cultural narratives”, Elliott’s concept presents some critical notions of adaptation that this study seeks to explore: when discussing the adaptation of Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* I will consider how anterior texts such as literary criticism and cultural iconicity influence the adaptations. This concept can also be understood to feed into (or from) recent studies which explore an adaptation’s contextuality and intertextuality, such as those of Cardwell, Hutcheon and Geraghty. In addition, it has parallels with Susan Stanford Friedman’s reading of Julia Kristeva and narrative spatialisation, a theory which inserts the reader into the processes of constructing textual meaning and, pertinently, allows for the insertion of the author in a manner that disrupts the problematic insertion of the “spirit” of an author as exhibited by critics employing Elliott’s psychic concept of adaptation.



## Alternative Ways of Conceptualising the Source-Adaptation Relationship

Sarah Cardwell exhibited a return to examining the relationship between source and adaptation in a manner which reflects my own conceptualisation of the source-adaptation relationship. In her paper “Source Novels,” delivered at the Association of Literature on Screen’s 2006 conference, Cardwell considered how the rhetorical style of Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955) was transposed to film in Lyne’s 1997 film adaptation. Cardwell’s paper examined the adaptation’s stylistic relationship with the novel, specifically focusing on the novel and film’s opening scene in which the protagonist Humbert Humbert drives whilst distracted by recollections of his Lolita, and her predecessor, Annabel. Cardwell noted how the novel employed alliteration and a fragmented rhetoric, as well as noting the rhythm of the narration (initially punctuated into four beats before reducing to three).<sup>136</sup> The car weaves from left to right across the road, with the camera both tracking it and remaining static, the visual rhythm created by this motion echoing the rhythm of the novel’s narration. The rhythm was more directly transposed with the *transference* of the novel’s first-person narration, but Cardwell is quick to note how the musical soundtrack (the non-verbal, aural signifiers) also adds to this rhythmical relationship. For Cardwell, it was critical that the interrelation between the film’s multiple signifiers was considered as developing a rhythmical relationship and not just the dialogue and musical soundtrack. The multiple signification of rhythm is noted as not just replicating the rhythm of the novel’s narration, but also enhancing it. Cardwell’s concern, much like my own, is with the role of the source text and how it can be reinserted into the study of adaptation without returning to the problems of fidelity, logophilia and iconophobia. In examining the value of the relationship between adaptation and the source Cardwell is making a dramatic revision of her earlier work in which she distanced the adaptation from its source; however, like me, she believes there is “something special” about the source, that it is an important intertext, but critically not the only one.

The relationship between the narration, or style of expression, of the source and the adaptation is often over-looked or dealt with formally. McFarlane’s *adaptation proper* considers the treatment of narration during adaptation by focusing on finding filmic equivalences for literary modes of narration, rather than other expressive proponents such as style or rhetoric — for instance, McFarlane’s chapter on *Great Expectations* focuses on the adaptation proper of Dickens’ first person



narration into what he describes as David Lean presenting “an enunciatory strategy which goes a long way towards ensuring parallelism between Pip’s and the audience’s knowledge.”<sup>137</sup> It is my intention to develop this comparative study of equivalences and explore in more detail the intermedial enunciatory relationship between source and adaptation. I intend to illustrate how the theory of adaptation proper can, itself, be adapted to produce a means of theorising the intermedial transference of a rhetorical style. In this study, then, I will adapt McFarlane to consider how adaptation proper is utilised to present a stylistic relationship with its source, something McFarlane’s narratological schema could not address. In addition, those “fundamental parts of the ur-text” noted by Cardwell will encompass more than what has been examined in detail to date. Central to this study is an in-depth analysis of the adaptations of a single source, Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, a text that has attracted a great deal of critical attention, inspiring numerous studies and debates regarding its political themes. Woolf herself is an author whose rhetoric is readily identifiable as belonging to her which makes her novel a critical choice when considering the issue of rhetoric and the stylistic relationship between source and adaptation.<sup>138</sup> Marleen Gorris’s *Mrs Dalloway* provides the opportunity to consider the adaptation of Woolf’s novel to screen, whereas *The Hours*, as I explore in chapter five, presents a more complex study as I consider a literary adaptation which in turn was adapted to film, which in turn, can be considered an adaptation of Woolf’s novel and which, in turn again, is heavily metamorphosed by its intertextualities.

### **Balancing the Source Text with Issues of Intertextuality and Contextuality**

McFarlane’s seminal *Novels to Film* not only presents us with a foundation with which to explore the relationship between source and adaptation, of novel and film in most instances, but it also introduces a consideration of both source and issues of contextuality and intertextuality — in essence, he marries the two succinctly, and it is this marriage that I wish to develop further through a detailed examination of one source novel, its adaptations, of their stylistic relationship(s), their intertextualities and their contextualities. Incorporated into McFarlane’s study of the novel-to-film process is a consideration of context and intertextuality, such as his analysis of intertextuality in MGM’s *Random Harvest* (1942) in which he argues “MGM, Freud, and 1942 are as important as” the source novel and its



author, James Hilton, “in shaping the film of *Random Harvest*”.<sup>139</sup> In his analysis of *Cape Fear*, McFarlane draws attention to “ideological shifts, ... changes in censorship strictures, and ... variations in aesthetic climate” which emerge from a thirty-four year time-lapse between the source novel and Scorsese’s adaptation.<sup>140</sup> Of additional interest with this case study is McFarlane’s situating of an earlier film adaptation as a key intertext, noting how the earlier film’s leading actors, Robert Mitchum and Gregory Peck, “are knowingly cast in [Scorsese’s] film in supporting roles which reverse their original personae”, a move which also reverses the actors’ more memorable screen appearances: Mitchum is cast as the local chief of police in contrast to his most notable role being the murderous preacher in *The Night of the Hunter* (1955); and Peck, famous for his role as Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1963), plays a corrupt lawyer.<sup>141</sup> I will explore the notion of actor, or persona, as an intertext when examining the significance of Eileen Atkins’ performances, as both actor and playwright/scriptwriter, when considering an adaptation’s multiple intertextual relationships. Intertextuality, then, and its vast range of intertexts clearly present adaptation criticism with a wealth of material that is highly relevant to the examination of the adaptation and its many intra- and inter-medial relations.

McFarlane’s analysis of how an actor’s performances in previous adaptations, or even star persona, can operate on an intertextual level feeds into Cardwell’s later proposal for a linear model of adaptation. If we recall, Cardwell proposed a linear model of adaptation in order to consider adaptation as analogous to biological evolution, as each adaptation is related to its predecessor. McFarlane’s reading of Scorsese’s playful inclusion of actors from a prior adaptation demonstrates Cardwell’s favouring of a linear model of adaptation over a centre-based model, as the latter would not acknowledge this relationship between adaptations, nor would it consider how the casting subverts the actors’ “star personae”. The various concepts of adaptation outlined by Elliott, such as the psychic, de(re)composing and trumping concepts, all introduce anterior influences operating on the relationship between source and adaptation, such as the problematic issue of authorial intention. In addition they offer other interesting notions that situate the reader in adaptation and introduce the idea of adaptation as criticism, all of which are again beyond the scope of a linear model. Elliott’s own conceptualisation of adaptation by analogy and its ability to disrupt the two theoretical



dogmas which problematise adaptation criticism, the word/image divide and the form/content fusion, is also denied by a linear model. It is necessary, therefore, to consider how two seemingly polarised models of adaptation noted by Cardwell, the centre-based and linear models, could be merged to permit a study of adaptation that incorporates both source-adaptation relations and issues of contextuality and intertextuality.

## My Theory: A Stylistic Web of Intertextuality

*Adaptation and appropriation also provide their own intertexts, so that adaptations perform in dialogue with other adaptations as well as their informing source. Perhaps it serves us better to think in terms of complex filtration, and in terms of intertextual webs or signifying fields, rather than simplistic one-way lines of influence from source to adaptation.*

Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 2006<sup>142</sup>

If a developed approach to adaptation criticism involves balancing an exploration of the source-adaptation relationship with an equally detailed analysis of contextuality and intertextuality, we must consider how can this be accomplished. How, in the words of Sanders can we “think less in terms of lines of influence and more in terms of webs or networks of allusion and (mutual) influence”?<sup>143</sup> I believe this can be found by amalgamating Cardwell’s centre-based model and linear model so that they merge into something akin to what Sanders terms “webs or networks of allusion”. By doing so, I am able to consider both the adaptation’s relationship to its source, as permitted by Cardwell’s centre-based model, and examine any adaptation’s relationship to prior adaptations, thus elaborating upon Sanders’s “intertextual webs”.

A web-based model of adaptation, like the centre-based model, situates the source text centrally, illustrating the defining role it plays; it is then surrounded by its adaptations, which are connected to the source and to each other. By overlapping Cardwell’s linear model onto a centre-based model we have an image which resembles a spindled wheel in which the source is centrally fixed to the adaptations that circle it, which are in turn linked to each other. However, this remains a



rigid structure which does not accommodate additional intertexts so it is necessary to tweak this into something more complex and less fixed, something much more organic, like a spider's web. With this web-based model I am able to illustrate how the source text bears a "special sort" of relationship to the adaptation, highlighting its significance, in that it is its relationship with the adaptation that defines it as an adaptation, by situating centrally. To reinforce the importance of the source I will introduce to this study a range of intertexts which are specifically associated with the source. These will include autobiographical writings such as extracts from Woolf's diaries and letters, Woolf's essays and a range of Woolf's fictional writings including novels and short stories. In addition to examining the literary criticism surrounding *Mrs Dalloway* and Woolf's style, I will also examine the biographical work of Woolf's nephew Oliver Bell and Woolf scholar Hermione Lee.

The flexibility of the web allows for a multitude of ever-increasing connections between adaptations, intertexts and, crucially, the centrally located source. It enables us to introduce additional intertexts, such as the issue of star persona raised by McFarlane in his analysis of *Cape Fear* and the multiple intertextual lines of influence are further increased. The web analogy also enables me to demonstrate how adaptation is a sum of all its intertexts and how the links between adaptations are also key contributors to the reading of adaptations. For instance, a spider's web is as dependent on its peripheral strands as it is on the centre from which all its connections emerge; it cannot exist without one or the other. Adaptation, likewise, cannot exist without all its parts.

This model of adaptation augments both of the preceding models that inform the figure of the web. It is with Genette's theory of *stylistic imitation* that I propose a new discussion of the relationship between source and novel, one which develops McFarlane's theory of *adaptation proper* to consider the issue of rhetoric to advance his consideration of filmic equivalences for literary narration. Stylistic imitation also enables adaptation criticism to mirror Kristeva's theory of intertextuality as transposition across multiple sign-systems in that it is not restricted to finding filmic equivalences for literary modes of narration. Stylistic imitation allows us to explore how an adaptation may transfer or adapt across different sign-systems "a certain style", such as the distinctive verbal style of Woolf. On the other hand, McFarlane's foregrounding of non-literary (and for the interest of this study I would



include filmic and televisual) texts intersecting other texts presents a means to augment Cardwell's linear model. Intertextuality, and contextuality, now encompasses a broader range of texts, transposed from a broader range of sign-systems other than those entrenched within the media of literature, film and television. Critical texts, such as those Genette terms metatexts, have been included in studies of adaptation, such as those discussed by Elliott under the psychic concept and the trumping concept. Criticism, however, is still literary, and whilst it remains an integral part of an adaptation's intertextuality, there are other intertexts which McFarlane allows us to incorporate. One such text which has to date been absent from intertextual readings of adaptation is cultural iconicity, such as the figure of the hysteric, or the various constructions of Virginia Woolf in cultural consciousness.

Reading the adaptation, then, as a web of intertexts will produce an in-depth study of the adaptations' many textual relationships and, as I demonstrated briefly in the opening of this chapter, there is such a complexity and range of intertextual relationships that necessitates I impose a narrow focus. Just as Cardwell focused her study on televisual adaptations of canonical literature and Elliott restricted her study of film adaptations of the Victorian novel to *Wuthering Heights* and *Alice in Wonderland* (and *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*), I will limit my study to just one source novel, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. By focusing on this one source I will be able to illustrate my web analogy in full, highlighting its myriad intertextualities, including a multitude of source related intertexts that are Woolfian in origin such as autobiographical and biographical, and demonstrate the critical value of Genette's *stylistic imitation* to any discussion of the source-adaptation relationship.



## A Case Study: *The Modern World: Ten Great Writers*

In 1988 Channel Four broadcast an arts-documentary series entitled *The Modern World: Ten Great Writers* exploring the work and life of “some of the great writers around the turn of the century”.<sup>144</sup> The ninth episode looked at Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, examining the novel, the author’s life and their position within literary criticism. *Ten Great Writers* makes for a somewhat unconventional study in adaptation, not only as it is one of a series of ten television programmes but in contrast to those films and television programmes which dominate the study of adaptation, it is, in the main, a non-fiction film, a documentary. This particular film is not solely concerned with adapting the novel, although adaptation is present, as the series editor Melvin Bragg notes:

The films we designed were ambitious. We chose to use drama to explore the fictionalized ideas of each writer and to concentrate on a single book, a principal work. We also gave ourselves the task of dramatizing, economically, the writer’s life, personal experience, background and artistic philosophy – but we wanted the writing not the biography to be the focus. In short we devised a form which interweaves dramatic portrayal with documentary techniques and critical explanations.<sup>145</sup>

The programme’s combination of documentary and drama to present the novel, the writing of the novel and the context of the writing, interweaves fiction, biography and academic criticism. This insertion of those texts Genette terms metatexts into the adaptation is something I shall return to in chapter 5 when I consider the literary and filmic adaptations of *The Hours*.

*Ten Great Writers*, whilst unconventional, is interesting when considering the variety of (inter)texts constructing the adaptation and, particularly, the significance of viewing the roles of both the source novel and intertextuality alongside one another. It illustrates Sanders’ description of adaptation as being “about multiple interactions and a matrix of possibilities”.<sup>146</sup> *Ten Great Writers* evinces this idea of “multiple interactions” as it foregrounds its source and intertexts, highlighting the text as being a mosaic of other texts. It consciously presents itself as palimpsestuous, a web of intertextuality, flaunting its source without privileging it to the extent of negating its other, integral intertexts.



### Bragg's "intelligent and accessible arts-film"

The film is constructed from three distinct sections interwoven: the first, a dramatic mode, features adaptations of scenes from the text, in this case the *Mrs Dalloway* novel; the second features the actress Eileen Atkins playing Woolf in a segment that dramatises a day in Woolf's life, specifically during the period she wrote *Mrs Dalloway*, and as such is a different dramatic mode to the first; and, finally, the third employs leading Woolf academic, Hermione Lee, who in conventional documentary mode outlines the biographical, socio-political and critical contexts of Woolf and the novel. The structure is governed by the film's genre and the intentions of the filmmakers. Bragg's above description of the film is an interesting one as it proposes the writing, and not the author, to be the focus of the film, an "ambitious" aim they attempt to achieve through a "form which interweaves dramatic portrayal with documentary techniques and critical explanations". Elsewhere Bragg refers to *Ten Great Writers* as "one of the most exciting and underrated artefacts of our day — the intelligent arts-film".<sup>147</sup> The significance of an adaptation's genre is, just as Cardwell and Geraghty have argued, an important consideration when examining the adaptation.

It proves pertinent to first examine the sections of *Ten Great Writers* concerned with adapting key scenes from the novel *Mrs Dalloway*, mainly as they present a contrast to the Gorris adaptation that I will examine in chapter 4. The film does not adapt the entirety of the novel but a selection of key scenes. This paring down is dictated not just by the temporal restrictions of producing a film for an hour-long slot on commercial television but also by the filmmakers' intentions of "dramatizing, economically, the writer's life, personal experience, background and artistic philosophy"; the adaptation of the novel necessarily focuses on the key scenes, characters and themes discussed in the film's other sections.<sup>148</sup> Those scenes selected for adaptation, in the order they appear in the film, are as follows: Clarissa's return home through the park with a flashback to Bourton with Peter Walsh's musings amongst the vegetables conversation; Clarissa's solitary, mid-afternoon reflections in her bedroom and a flashback to her kiss with Sally Seton at Bourton; Clarissa as she is interrupted by Peter Walsh whilst mending her green dress for the party and flashbacks to the dissolution of their relationship at Bourton; Septimus and Rezia Warren Smith in Regent's Park; and finally, Clarissa's party during which Clarissa retreats from the Bradshaws' talk of death, before re-



turning to Peter. The novel has been significantly adapted, including some editing which has resulted in, amongst other things, the absence of the famous sky-writer and the character of Richard Dalloway. Significantly, the adaptation process has not detracted from the film adaptation but contributes to the film as a whole. The first scene adapted involves Clarissa Dalloway observing Septimus and Rezia Smith seated upon a bench in Regent's Park, the latter of whom turns to her husband exclaiming "Look Septimus, look at the lady's flowers". In the novel there is no direct interaction between the connected characters but, as with Gorris' adaptation, the film opts to foreground the characters's thematic relationship by forging a visual link between the pair. In addition, Lee's commentary later highlights the significance of the Clarissa/Septimus relationship, noting how it is integral to the meaning of the novel. Having the Clarissa/Septimus interaction as the first event in the adapted scenes affirms Lee's comments on its importance which do not occur until the second half of the film as the viewer recollects the immediacy of the relationship.

The film, in Bragg's words, is an "intelligent and accessible arts-film" and this is evident in the film's use of archival footage during the sequence depicting Septimus' hysteria, or "shell-shock". Septimus, in voice-over, contemplates his own history whilst the camera presents his point-of-view, a shot of the park landscape. When Septimus discusses the war transposed over the shot of the parkland is archival footage of the First World War, notably depicting life in the trenches and soldiers going "over the top" into battle. The footage is suggestive of Septimus' memories and the fact that they are transposed onto Septimus' present perspective echoes Septimus' simultaneous experience of past and present as conveyed in the novel and Gorris' later film adaptation. The employment of archival footage, and not a reconstruction or fictional adaptation of Septimus' experiences, is a specific convention tied into *Ten Great Writers'* status as a documentary film. Archival images such as film and still-photography are conventionally employed by documentaries, alongside biographical writings, witnesses and/or familial testimonies etc to give the film "authenticity".<sup>149</sup> The archive footage visually reinforces Septimus' verbal account of the horrors of war and functions within the conventions of documentary to ground both the character's testimony within history and Woolf's writing within its socio-historical context.



The adaptation of *Mrs Dalloway* and the dramatisation of Woolf's working life as a writer draw upon the generic conventions of setting and costume in the period drama. The scenes adapting the novel feature actors in costume associated with the period of the novel. The setting, in contrast to the conventions of period drama, is less lavish and is not dwelt upon as they would be in the period drama with its conventional lingering shots of the *mise-en-scène*. Rather they function simply as a backdrop for the actors' performance, much as they would in a non-period drama. For instance, shots of Bourton are limited to a doorway through which Clarissa exits and shots of Clarissa's party are restricted to long shots of the characters as they converse; there are no sweeping extreme long-shots presenting a full house in the grips of a party as there are in Gorris' 1997 film adaptation. Whilst this is more than likely due to time and budget constraints it is interesting that this period adaptation does not exhibit all the generic conventions of the period drama.

It is in the scenes depicting Virginia Woolf as she writes that the meticulous attention to setting associated with the adaptation of canonical classics can be seen.<sup>150</sup> The room in which she writes features stacks of notebooks and the mirror into which she gazes during her monologue, which draws upon her famous myriad impressions speech, is surrounded by paintings of the Bloomsbury style produced by the Omega group to whom her sister Vanessa belonged. Such detail is foregrounded by the documentary's inclusion of Vanessa Bell's cover illustration of *Mrs Dalloway* which is used to introduce the adapted scenes. Atkins's Woolf speaks the opening lines from the novel as the scene cuts away from Woolf in her study to a shot of Bell's cover fading to a shot of Clarissa Dalloway carrying the flowers. The sequence also features Woolf exiting Monk's House in Rodmell, the house in which she lived before committing suicide. This biographical fact is demarcated by an earlier scene in which Lee, in the present day, stands outside the house detailing Woolf's writing and her search for a "new form". The documentary interweaves its three sections, not just in terms of edits which cut between the three sections, but also through its inclusion of visual and aural references which provide associations between the three sections.



## Textual Weaving

*Ten Great Writers* is an adaptation, and yet it is not entirely an adaptation: it features a selection of scenes adapted from Woolf's novel, as well as a fictional dramatisation of her life in which autographic intertexts such as Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, her essays, and autobiography are present, interspersed with an explanatory dialogue from Woolf scholar and biographer Hermione Lee. *Ten Great Writers* is, above all, an adaptation of Woolf's writings; it is a web of Woolfian texts. First, the film features two of Woolf's novels: primarily, it adapts scenes from *Mrs Dalloway*, as I have discussed, and second, it features Woolf's later novel, *The Waves*. To suggest that the film adapts scenes from this novel would be a stretch, but one may consider it to be an example of what Sanders called appropriation. *The Waves* appears on three occasions in the film, producing a poetic commentary which acts as a stylistic book-ending device: first, as the film opens; second, at the opening of Part Two; and third, at the film's close. Each features shots of the sea which, as with Woolf's novel, come ever later in the day, and each is accompanied by a voice-over quoting from the poetic interludes describing waves in the novel. The film's employment of these quotations from *The Waves* echoes their use in the novel and as such, whilst not adaptation proper, are a stylistic imitation of the literary devices used by Woolf. The final words spoken in the film, "[t]he waves broke on the shore", are the closing words of Woolf's novel.

The film "dramatises", in Bragg's words, the writer writing the novel, portraying Woolf at work in her study. These scenes echo the temporality of the film's primary textual focus, *Mrs Dalloway*, as they presents one day in the life of the writer writing the novel; the scenes open with a well-lit room which, as the film progresses, fades until the writer is working in near darkness. This sense of it being a day in the life of Woolf is reinforced with scenes presenting her walking her dog in late afternoon. Interestingly, the biographical dramatisation adopts the same temporality as the novel it depicts being written. The sense of time passing is also a theme in *The Waves*, albeit a lifetime as opposed to a day, and the inclusion of the three quotations from this novel highlights the importance of time as a theme to both *Mrs Dalloway* and the adapting film. The film, thus, uses the theme of time passing to unite its representation of the author writing and what it is the author, we know, has written. It is during the scenes presenting Woolf writing that *Ten Great Writers* employs an array of Woolf's non-fictional writings: extracts from



Woolf's diaries and letters are quoted alongside critical writings such as *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas* and essays including "Modern Fiction" to "dramatise" the writer writing. It is the inclusion of these writings which is of most interest for, I argue, they are central to this film's role in illustrating my theory of adaptation.

One scene dramatising Woolf writing, referenced above, involves Woolf looking into a mirror whilst speaking one of her most famous passages from the essay "Modern Fiction" which begins: "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel..."<sup>151</sup> Following this Woolf turns away from the mirror asking: "Is this what the young women of Cambridge expect me to talk about when they ask me to talk about women and fiction?" In a later scene Woolf, standing behind a lectern, addresses the camera with: "Young women of Cambridge, you've asked me here to talk about women and fiction." Woolf's *A Room Of One's Own* opens with a discussion of its origins, "But you may ask, we asked you to speak about women and fiction — what has this got to do with a room of one's own?"; an accompanying footnote then clarifies: "This essay is based upon two lectures read to the Arts Society at Newnham and the Odtas at Girton in October 1928."<sup>152</sup> These two scenes which together present a narrative of a fictional day in Woolf's life, weave together two separate sources of Woolf's writing, as well as "dramatising" the origins of one.

One critical aspect of *Ten Great Writers* is the manner in which the three sections are edited together; it is this which illustrates how the adapted scenes of *Mrs Dalloway* operate within the film as a whole. The film interweaves the adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway*, the adaptations of Woolf's writing, and Lee's critical overview to create and illustrate its arguments. The *Mrs Dalloway* sections, as discussed above, illustrate the points raised by Woolf's writing and Lee's criticism and as such have a function within the film that influences what scenes are adapted and how. There is a particularly pertinent instance of this in the second part of the film and the introduction of Septimus Smith.<sup>153</sup>

Woolf, sitting in her study, comments on the novel: "I think the design is more remarkable ... I want it to be a study of insanity and suicide, the world seen by the sane and in the insane, side by side." The monologue is an amalgamation of extracts from Woolf's diary, the first part is taken from her entry on 15th Octo-



ber 1923 and the second from a year earlier, 14th October 1922, which was the entry in which Woolf first details her decision to develop the original short story/stories into a novel. This is followed by a cut to the *Mrs Dalloway* adaptation, a return to the first scene in which Septimus and Rezia Warren Smith are seated side by side in the park and observed by Clarissa. The adapted scene thus presents the thematic element of the novel that Woolf's diary extracts are discussing, the sane and the insane are presented within the same shot, Septimus and Rezia to the right of the shot, facing the camera with Clarissa, back to camera, to the left and slightly to the fore of the shot. The visual is reinforcing Woolf's discussion of presenting two opposites whose experience of the world mirrors the other, they are side by side but, significantly like Woolf's comment suggests, reversals of each other: we see one's face and the other's back. The film then cuts to Lee commenting on the link between Clarissa and Septimus, describing it as what "gives the novel its meaning".

The adapted scenes, both from *Mrs Dalloway* and the adaptations of Woolf's non-fictional writings, and the critical commentary are edited together in a manner which both presents the literary criticism and illustrates the argument being made; thus, one can see, enabling the presentation of complex literary theory in a readily comprehensive fashion: the intelligent and accessible arts-film, so to speak. Thus, the adapted scenes act as illustrative devices designed to support the film's other elements and it is its function within the documentary that influences the adaptation: the adaptation proper of both *Mrs Dalloway* and Woolf's writing is influenced by their function within the film. For instance, the adaptation of the Regent's Park scenes in which Clarissa Dalloway observes Septimus and Rezia Warren-Smith — this does not occur in the novel, whilst both Clarissa and the Warren-Smiths both observe the sky-writer from different areas of the park, the couple are actually seen by Peter Walsh. The adaptation proper occurs in order to illustrate the thematic connection between the characters as it is discussed by Lee.

It is to Genette's theory of metatexts that I now turn and the sections of *Ten Great Writers* in which Hermione Lee discusses Woolf and *Mrs Dalloway*. Lee produces a context in which the two sections involving adaptation are situated. Lee is first introduced in voiceover detailing various biographical details which accompanies first a shot of the exterior of Monk's House in Rodmell, Woolf's home at the time of writing the novel, and then an image of a bust of Woolf. The



film then cuts to Lee standing outside Monk's House discussing Woolf's search for a "new form" of writing which enables her to move in and out of time and different characters' consciousness. Lee's next appearance continues along the same vein as, again in voiceover, she discusses Woolf's family, most notably her father, and the Bloomsbury group and the influence they had upon her writing, as well as her critical reception, all of which is accompanied by a selection of still photographs of those being discussed. Lee comments on how Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, and her oppressive childhood in a "Victorian patriarchal family" can be seen in much of her writing, and how the snobbery of the Bloomsbury group has resulted in Woolf being similarly perceived as a snob through her association with the group and, thus, her work has not always received the attention it deserved. Lee's role is clearly that of an "anchoring narrator figure", as her commentary provides a verbal link between the representation of the novel and the writer.<sup>154</sup> Hermione Lee's role as an "anchoring figure" generates an air of authenticity as her "knowing voice" provides an authority that both anchors the documentary's meaning and "eliminates whatever ambiguity might be inherent".<sup>155</sup> Lee's credentials as a literary academic, and thus a "knowing voice", are noted by an intertitle which is transposed over her first appearance on screen.<sup>156</sup> Lee later published her seminal biography of Woolf which, as I shall discuss in chapter 5, was used by Cunningham as a source for *The Hours*.

Lee's commentary also engages with literary criticism, noting how Woolf was one of the most important writers during the Modernist period and how, critically, she was exceptional, being the only woman writer to be afforded an equal status to her male peers such as Eliot.<sup>157</sup> Following a verbal cue from a Woolf scene, Lee is shown in the British Museum reading room performing a search of Virginia Woolf's works whilst Atkins's Woolf asks, in voice-over, "Have you any notion how many books about women are written by men?" At which point Lee interjects: "Anyone who feels inclined to dismiss Virginia Woolf as an ethereal, apolitical, neurotic lady-novelist should look at the range of her achievements." Lee continues to list Woolf's writing achievements, her distinguished critical essays, her role in owning and running a publishing press, and her political presence as an active feminist. Lee's interjection is a notable one as it highlights Woolf's tenuous position within literary criticism and within culture as a whole. Woolf, as I shall return to in chapter 5, has tended to evoke strong yet juxtaposing



images of feminism and hysteria, making her a figure with an oxymoronic iconicity. Woolf's feminism has, similarly, been an issue for contention and one which Lee's commentary again engages in as she comments of *Mrs Dalloway*:

Virginia Woolf's particular kind of feminism isn't just in the subject matter of the novel, it's also in the way it was written. Clarissa wanting to resist tyranny and coercion in life is like Woolf wanting to resist old rules and rigid forms for the novel, so she connects her characters through a fluid stream of consciousness.

Lee is specifically linking Woolf's writing and her politics, something feminist literary criticism began during their reclamation of Woolf in the late 1970's. Lee's earlier comments about Woolf as a neurotic lady-novelist are also worth noting as it is her biography that "reclaimed" Woolf from the neurotic image that had haunted her since her suicide and, notably, since the publication of her nephew, Quentin Bell's, biography. I shall return to these two, contrasting biographical images of Woolf in chapter 5.

Hermione Lee functions as a leading commentator on Woolf, her life and her writing, anchoring the three sections of the documentary and, thus, linking the novel, Woolf's life, and her writings. One can read Lee's presence within the documentary as being metonymic, that she represents her biography of Woolf and vice versa, and as such, Lee herself becomes an intertext. If we conceive of *Ten Great Writers* as an illustration of my theory of adaptation which posits, in this case, *Mrs Dalloway* at the centre of a web in which adaptations and intertexts are linked, then Lee becomes analogous for the textual associations that bridge source (*Mrs Dalloway*), adaptation(s) (*Ten Great Writers* and, later, *The Hours*) and intertexts (biography, literary criticism and Woolf's writings). In my theory of adaptation the texts which construct the web of intertextuality are not exclusively verbal, or even written, and, like Cardwell in *Adaptation Revisited*, I am interested in the interplay between extra- and inter-textual referents other than, or rather in addition to, the source novel. One particular point of intersection between my own study and Cardwell's is the role of the actor, of which she notes:

Whilst the re-use of the same few actors in classic-novel adaptations and 'heritage films' functions on the one hand to assert the existence of a distinct generic microcosm — the 'world' of the classic-novel adaptation — it also functions to import additional and particular resonances to the parts actors play, and to accentuate the programmes' links with other texts and with the outside world.<sup>158</sup>



Just as Hermione Lee's presence contributes to the sense of authenticity of the documentary, the casting of Eileen Atkins as Virginia Woolf has a specific function within the film. If we are to consider the presence of non-conventional intertexts then the presence of Eileen Atkins is a critical one when conceiving of adaptation as a palimpsestous web.

### **Eileen Atkins as a Writer Writing: Performing Woolf('s Writing)**

Eileen Atkins is renowned for performing, and writing, Woolf. In addition to her performance in *Ten Great Writers* she starred in the 1989 stage adaptation of Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, which was filmed for television in 1991. In 1992 she again starred as Woolf on stage in *Vita and Virginia*, a play adapted by Atkins from the letters of Woolf and Sackville-West in which Vanessa Redgrave played Vita. Atkins, spurred on by Redgrave, then produced the screenplay for the 1997 adaptation *Mrs Dalloway*, for which Redgrave was then cast in the eponymous role. In 2002, securing Atkins' position as an authority on Woolf, she was given a cameo role in the film adaptation of Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, playing Barbara the florist from whom Clarissa buys her flowers. Atkins' cameo in *The Hours* positions her alongside the novel's author, Cunningham who also has a minor walk-on role in the film, and arguably disrupts the idea of a singular authorial authority by introducing a second authorial figure who returns the reader to a previous film adaptation of *Mrs Dalloway*, a link made apparent in the DVD commentary. Interestingly, therefore, the film adaptation *The Hours* features three authorial figures: Mrs Woolf, Michael Cunningham, and Eileen Atkins are all visually present, with the novel introducing additional authorial figures through its inclusion of a source list which features, amongst others, Lee. These authorial figures create intertextual connections between *Ten Great Writers*, *Mrs Dalloway*, and *The Hours* that are not dependent on Woolf's source text, but on the figure of Woolf — here it is the figure of the author that creates an intertextual web as much as the source text itself.

*Ten Great Writers* may be Atkins' first Woolfian role but it is her presence here that situates her firmly within my web of intertextuality as she, like the novel itself, can be linked to, and arguably links, the three film adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway*. It is Atkins and her career performing and writing Woolf that allows us to consider the adaptations as relating not only to the source novel, but also to each



other. Atkins' authorial presence is heightened by her association with Woolf's autobiographical writings: in *Ten Great Writers* she performs sections of Woolf's diaries and letters, and the play she penned, *Vita and Virginia*, was an adaptation of Woolf's correspondence with Vita and her diaries. Atkins becomes an authority on Woolf as she, literally, speaks her words: these words contribute to her position as an authorial figure but she herself (re-)introduces the authorial figure of Woolf through her association with these Woolfian intertexts to the complex web connecting *Mrs Dalloway* and its adaptations.

My study, in contrast to Geraghty who demanded we turn away from the source and focus upon the adaptation's relationship with, for example, genre, industry, and the auteur, looks at how the textual referents weave a series of relationships across and between the source and its adaptations. I am concerned with how a return to the source and its author (or authorial figures) introduces additional intertextual relationships that are as integral to how each adaptation is read as it's relationship with the source novel. Both the novel and Atkins influence our reading of the three adaptations; any knowledge of either the novel or her previous performances as actor and/or writer that is brought to the adaptation is woven together as we, as readers, construct our own meaning from the text. These Woolfian intertexts are subsequently drawn upon by Cunningham and the authorial figure(s), or spirit(s), far from closing down the web of intertextuality open it up and introduce more connections and associations. It is in the fifth and final chapter that I will illustrate how the various authorial intertextual and extratextual strands are further woven together uniting both the source novel and its adaptations.



# Chapter Two

## Mrs Woolf and Mrs Brown: A Rhetoric of Imitation and Impressions

In this study of adaptation I am determining a broader range of intertextual sources to consider less normative texts such as cultural iconicity alongside intertexts such as academic criticism which have featured in recent studies of intertextuality. In addition I am expanding upon how the relationship between source and adaptation is theorised in order that the adaptation proper of style and/or rhetoric are examined in more detail. These two strands are then intertwined as I explicitly draw upon intertexts written by or associated with the author of the source, thus making the intertextuality source-related. To accomplish this it is necessary to determine both the style of the adapted source and the multiple texts which are interwoven in the adaptations. In chapter three I will focus upon the source novel, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, as well as on the academic criticism surrounding it. In this chapter I intend to focus upon Woolf's non-fiction, such as her critical essays "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and "Modern Fiction", which illustrate her approach to writing fiction as well as featuring as intertexts in the adaptations: *The Hours* includes its own fictional Mrs Brown and, as demonstrated in chapter one, *Ten Great Writers* foregrounds its use of these essays as intertexts. In these essays Woolf asserts her relationship with her literary predecessors and outlines her approach to fiction. I will explore these, then follow my analysis with an examination of her writing.

It is necessary to open an examination of Woolf's writing with an overview of her relationship to and position within (and without) the canon, as this influences how she herself conceptualised her work and how her work is subsequently received and critiqued. In chapter one, I drew upon McFarlane and his marrying of the source and issues of contextuality and intertextuality in his seminal study



*Novels to Film* as well as noting how contexts, such as genre, production and prior adaptations, were explored through the work of Cardwell and Geraghty. In this study, I intend to develop a discussion surrounding the role of the source text's author and how this introduces numerous contexts and intertexts, demonstrating how these, in turn, become part of the intertextual web for subsequent adaptations. It is, therefore, pertinent to consider and define the different contexts relevant to the study of Woolf, her writing, and the adaptations. Such an approach will also facilitate another element of this thesis, the examination of a stylistic relationship between source and adaptation — Woolf herself frequently wrote upon her own writing, whether in autobiography or essays, which provides an insight into the style of writing presented in our source text, *Mrs Dalloway*. For the moment I will consider the literary context from which Woolf wrote and with which she is, oxymoronically, both associated with and excluded from. This entails an examination of the modernist movement as well as a discussion of the literary context from which Woolf sought to extricate herself, that of her literary predecessors such as H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, which are central to her two critical essays on fiction: "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown". The latter, as I shall demonstrate in this chapter, is an acute example of Woolf's own employment of stylistic imitation. Interwoven with all of the above is the issue of the socio-political context, both contemporary to Woolf and contemporary to her readers, of which this study will focus upon feminist issues such as female sexuality and female oppression.

### **Virginia Woolf & Modernism**

The relationship between Virginia Woolf and modernism has been a contentious one; her novel *Jacob's Room* is positioned alongside T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, all published in 1922, as signifying the birth of 'High Literary Modernism' and, yet, as a woman writer she is often excluded from what has been, primarily, recognised as a male movement. Woolf's precarious relationship with modernism, or perhaps modernism's precarious relationship with Woolf, is integral to any discussion of Woolf's writing. This relationship between Woolf and modernism is further complicated by the many ways in which the movement is defined. Broadly speaking, modernism involved a rejection of literary realism with writers adopting experimental forms of representation to reflect



and explore the increased urbanisation of society and the cultural dislocation brought about by an acceleration in industrialisation, the First World War, the rise of the Suffragettes, crises in religious beliefs and the introduction of Freudian psychoanalysis.<sup>159</sup> Whereas this gloss situates both form and politics at the centre of modernism, earlier critical studies limited themselves to formal criticism, negating the multiple and contradictory politics central to the movement. One such faction included modernist critics Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot and the New Critics, who focused upon a male dominated canon and issues of form. Exploring modernism as both an issue of form and as an entirely *male* movement is both deeply problematic and extremely reductive, something recent criticism has rectified. Feminist literary criticism incorporates both women writers and the socio-political into discussions of literary modernism. It is necessary to examine these shifts in modernist criticism not simply to situate this study within a literary theoretical context but, significantly, to demonstrate the significance of contexts such as literary criticism, biography and the socio-political amongst others, to the study of both literature and film. Pertinent to this study is the consideration of Woolf's "form", her style of writing, as this provides the key to an examination of a stylistic relationship between source and adaptation. In chapter three I shall examine in detail how Woolf's form is an intrinsic element of her politics as her employment of literary impressionism is integral to her representation of the hysteric, and how, in chapter four, this is adapted to screen by Gorris. In addition, it is necessary to consider the politics of Woolf's writing, particularly Woolf's feminism and her sexual politics, as these come to the fore in chapter five when I discuss *The Hours*, the impact of literary criticism and what may be called the "queering" of *Mrs Dalloway*.

### **A Very Masculine Modernism: Lewis' "Men of 1914", Leavis and New Criticism**

In *Blasting and Bombadiering* (1937) Wyndham Lewis positioned himself, alongside Ezra Pound, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot, as central to the modernist movement, naming (t)his key group "The Men of 1914". Lewis' label and selection of authors determines the movement as one of men, its specific temporal location calling to mind the commencement of the First World War, cementing Lewis' modernism as a *masculine* one. Significantly, Lewis' male precedent informed subsequent theories of modernism, such as those of F. R. Leavis, T. S. Eliot



and the New Critics who heavily influenced the construction of the literary canon and propagated modernism as being concerned with formal precision, as Bonnie Kime Scott argues:

The New Critics (to whom Leavis is connected via I. A. Richards) are generally credited by feminists with establishing a male-dominated modernist canon that serves formalist modes of unity, tension, irony, and paradox, ignoring personal and political considerations including gender, class, and colonial marginalization.<sup>160</sup>

Scott acknowledges Woolf's presence, albeit compromised, within the formal (and male) modernist canon: "Woolf is enlisted as the token woman, acceptable because most comparable in her experiments to men."<sup>161</sup> Woolf's position is a tenuous one; she is there but she is there as other and, employing Lacan, is therefore there as *not* one of them. Woolf's own sense of her position alongside writers such as Eliot foregrounds the ambiguity Scott acknowledges. In her biography Hermione Lee suggests an insight into Woolf's own thoughts when publishing "Character in Fiction", an early version of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", which was published by the Hogarth Press in the first of its "Hogarth Essays" series in the autumn of 1924, following Eliot's publication of the essay in July in *The Criterion*:

["Character in Fiction"] was published with Eliot's essays on Dryden, Marvell, and the Metaphysical poets. [Woolf] probably felt anxious about the conjunction of their two pamphlets, hers so discursive, personal and anecdotal, his so impersonal and authoritative.<sup>162</sup>

Lee suggests that Woolf was keenly in tune with literature and her own relation to it, demonstrating an awareness of her tenuous position both within and without literary modernism. In her essay Woolf can only refer to hypothetical writers in her discussion of a new fiction which is yet to be fully developed. In contrast, Eliot's essay celebrates a series of male poets and sees Eliot situate himself in a celebrated circle of masculine authorship. Eliot is able to place himself within a tradition of masculine writers as he desires to redevelop and re-master an already existing discourse rather than smash a literary tradition and produce a new modern fiction.

Peter Nicholls in *Modernisms* (1995) supports Scott's opinion of an early modernist canon dominated (and distinguished) by formal concerns, explaining that "the most familiar form of Anglo-American modernism [is] known to us largely through rehearsals of its formal qualities".<sup>163</sup> Leavis echoed Lewis' "Men of



1914" with his favouring of modernists such as Pound, Joyce, Eliot and, a later addition, Lawrence, a selection which determined the formulation of a modernist canon as distinctly male and, as Scott and Nicholls state, being expressly concerned with form.<sup>164</sup>

### Modernism(s)

Defining modernism, particularly as a singular, unified movement, is problematic even before we introduce issues such as gender and the negation of female authors. Simply determining the inauguration of the movement has produced conflicts, even within the male definitions of modernism: Lewis' "Men of 1914" precedes the generally accepted date of the height of high modernism marked by the publication of *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *Jacob's Room* by six years, and, in addition, others have determined the writings of Joseph Conrad and Henry James in the late nineteenth century as the beginnings of modernism. Bonnie Kime Scott, as we shall return to shortly, suggests the height of literary modernism as being 1928. In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (1999) Michael Levenson suggests that "it is tempting to make the many Modernisms into one thing, and then to place that one thing into a single chapter within a tidy narrative".<sup>165</sup> Levenson identifies the need to recognise the multiplicity of modernism and demonstrates how defining it singularly as "one thing in a single chapter", conflicts with one of the movement's central (and unifying) concerns: the rejection of a whole, singular, unified literature. Modernisms, he acknowledges in the following critical gloss, share:

certain common devices and general preoccupations: the recurrent act of *fragmenting unities* (unities of character or plot or pictorial space or lyric form), the use of mythic paradigms, the refusal of norms of beauty, the willingness to make radical linguistic experiment, all often inspired by the resolve (in Eliot's phrase) to startle and disturb the public.<sup>166</sup> [*my italics*]

Levenson's gloss presents a movement (of movements) united in its rejection of convention and a desire to change normative modes of cultural representation, to present new, modern and fragmented forms, resulting in a series of modernisms united in their fragmentation. Modernisms, as opposed to modernism, allows us to conceive of and celebrate a literary consciousness in terms of its similarities *and*



its differences, encouraging a multiplicity that disrupts the exclusive male modernist canon, allowing for a broader, more diverse (and inclusive) range of writings to be considered as part of a modernist movement of many. Modernisms, in moving away from the Men of 1914 and the New Critics' restrictive theorising of modernism, transcends preoccupation with form and counters the problematic negation of politics, thus opening the modernist debate to issues of contextuality and, significantly, a consideration of the socio-political. The insertion of the political and the celebration of difference would recognise the cultural and social fragmentation contemporary to the modernist writers.

### **Woolf and Modernism: A Feminist's Modernist and Modernist Feminine Voices**

In *Refiguring Modernism* (1995) Bonnie Kime Scott is concerned with, as the title suggests, refiguring these earlier, male, formal conceptualisations of modernism through a focused analysis of a trio of women writers, the work they produced, and, importantly, their professional lives and relationships with other modernist writers, male and female. Scott christens her modernist trio, who are Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, and Rebecca West, "The Women of 1928", a subversive imitation of Lewis' Men of 1914 whose date denotes two altogether different historical events to that of the Great War: in March 1928 women became entitled to the same voting rights as men when the Equal Franchise Act was passed; and, in November of that year Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* stood trial for obscenity for its representation of a lesbian relationship. 1928, therefore, is a moment in history which marks a heightened cultural awareness of feminism, women's equality, and sexuality, issues notably suppressed by a patriarchal culture, as epitomised by the 1914 war.<sup>167</sup>

Scott's "Women of 1928", unlike the 1922 milestone, is determined by the literary productivity of her chosen authors, and *not* by the publication of individual works; in other words, by their professional status as writers and, critically, publishers. "Indeed, the women of 1928 cry out not for individual commemoration but for professional connection."<sup>168</sup> The moment is not simply significant in terms of a shift in cultural debates and the disruption of socio-political exclusion, but, as Scott's definition below demonstrates, it marks a shift in the gender imbalance of the male-dominated writing profession and publishing sphere.



“The Women of 1928” is my own term, calling attention to a second rise in modernism. It selects a year when Woolf, West, and Barnes were highly productive, having found strategies to succeed as professional writers and a degree of formal license. They had written their way out of their confining paternal, avuncular, and male modernist relationships and literary patterns. They had found women-made circles and journals.<sup>169</sup>

Critically, then, Scott is determining her second-rise of modernism by the professional successes of women and, importantly, the establishment of *other* modernist collaborative circles, a modernist “web of attachments”.<sup>170</sup> Scott maps the various relationships between modernists, male and female, canonical and non-canonical, to demonstrate the significant role attachments played in the modernist movement, noting “a more diversely energized modernist field” than she, or others, had previously considered.<sup>171</sup> Scott’s first mapping produced “[a] Tangled Mesh of Modernists”, but when she focused the relationships through three central figures, Woolf, West, and Barnes, the mesh becomes a web through which to explore the importance of the attachments, whether to the Men of 1914, the Edwardian “Uncles” (such as Bennett and Wells whom Woolf disparages in her essay “Modern Fiction”), or other attachments such as family and friends. It is the use of a centralising figure, or figures, that makes Scott’s web function, and it is this notion that informs my own web analogy as the source text operates as a central tenet from which additional texts, including authorial figures and cultural icons, form additional intertextual relationships.

The image of the web is one adopted by Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own* and, Scott explains, appears an unusual one to associate with dominant male understandings of modernism: the use of metaphor contrasts with the “hard, exact words called for in much-cited modernist manifestoes, such as Ezra Pound’s prescription for imagism”, and the preoccupation with attachments counters the “depersonalization” of Eliot’s poetics and the formalism of the New Critics.<sup>172</sup> Scott’s introduction of the image of the web to modernism not only positions three women writers at its (professional) centre but, in bringing to light Woolf’s preoccupation with attachment, Scott signifies the importance of context, in this instance that of a female professional literary circle. The web and its attachments are “women-made”, illustrating a unity, but not one of form, or of politics, but rather one of defiance. Scott’s three authors, like Levenson’s many Modernisms, complicate a simple, singular definition: “All three say things that matter about both writ-



ing and modernism, in syntax that challenges and involves readers", — as opposed to Eliot who sought to "startle and disturb" them — and, they "defy a unified account, even of their modernism, and certainly of modernism in general".<sup>173</sup> Unity comes not from the formal or political strands of modernism, but from "professional connection". Scott's refiguration of modernism, like my refiguring of adaptation, is concerned with attachments and webs, the latter of which Woolf poses, in *A Room of One's Own*, as a figure for fiction: "fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners".<sup>174</sup>

The limits of this study dictate that the spider's web attachments to be examined are not those between modernist writers per se — Scott has already mapped these. I explore the textual attachments between a source and its adaptation(s), adapting Scott's web of personal attachments into a formal web of intertextuality. In addition, I will turn to those (often fleeting) attachments to life which Woolf sought to capture in her fiction, and how these are, in turn, manifested in succeeding film adaptations of her writing. In doing so, I will demonstrate the similarities between Woolf's work and that of the literary impressionists such as Ford Madox Ford and how this impressionism becomes the stylistic link between Woolf's writing and its adaptations. It is to Woolf's own "modernist manifesto" that I now turn, as contained in the two essays "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs Brown". These essays demonstrate both Woolf's own rejection of literary realism, specifically that favoured by the Edwardian authors such as Bennett and Wells. Critically they also demonstrate how Woolf mirrors the theories of literary Impressionism, such as those expressed in the critical writing of Ford in his two-part article "On Impressionism" (1915), to which I shall return.

## Woolf and The Materialists

### Character in Fiction

*I daresay one ought to invent a completely new form.*

Virginia Woolf, in a letter to David Garnett dated 26th July 1917.<sup>175</sup>

Woolf's essays "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" are acute remonstrations against the literary conventions she, as a Georgian writer, inherited from her Edwardian predecessors. Woolf's critique focuses upon three



Edwardian writers whom she collectively refers to as the “Materialists”: H.G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennett — the latter, as the title of the second essay suggests, “is perhaps the worst culprit of the three”.<sup>176</sup> It is in “Modern Fiction” (1919) that Woolf coins the label the Materialists, arguing that it is their negation of character in favour of meticulous observations recording the symptoms of an impoverished social class system that she disagrees with: “it is because they are concerned not with the spirit but the body that they have disappointed us”.<sup>177</sup> Woolf’s critique of the Materialists’ (mis)treatment of character is developed in “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”, whose original title when published in *The Criterion* in 1924 was, tellingly, “Character in Fiction”. In this essay Woolf employs what Genette was later to term “stylistic imitation”, and what I shall determine the adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway* to be doing in chapters four and five. Critically, Woolf uses stylistic imitation for political means, employing it to illustrate her argument and expose the flaws she perceives in the writing of the Materialists by contrasting their story-telling with her own. These two essays detail Woolf’s own theory of fiction, her rejection of earlier literary conventions which she ascertains are an unwieldy restriction, a bondage from which she and her Georgian writers need to break free, and her theories of novel-writing and the depiction of life and human nature.

Woolf opens “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” by suggesting what it is that drives writers to write fiction: “[It is my] belief that men and women write novels because they are lured on to create some character which has thus imposed itself upon them”, a theory, she hastens to add, which “has the sanction of Mr. Arnold Bennett”.<sup>178</sup> Bennett attracted the most attention in Woolf’s diatribes on writing fiction, so her turning to such an author to sanction her opinion is ironic. For Woolf the Materialists deserve thanks “for having shown us [Woolf and her contemporaries] what they might have done and have not done; what we certainly could not do, but as certainly, perhaps, do not wish to do”.<sup>179</sup> Her ironic gratitude, then, is for exemplifying how not to write modern fiction. Woolf appreciates (and quotes) Bennett’s sentiment that “‘The foundation of good fiction is character-creating and nothing else’”,<sup>180</sup> but she questions his methods which she perceives as eradicating any voice at the expense of his own. It is the pursuit of creating character in fiction which drives her writing.



Woolf commences her quest with a contemplation of the nature of human character with her oft-cited (and oft-imitated) quotation: "in or about December, 1910, human character changed".<sup>181</sup> 1910 marks the death of Edward VII and the ascension to the throne of his son, George V and, hence, is the point at which Woolf and her "Georgian" contemporaries become distinguished from those earlier writers, the Edwardians, or to be more specific, the Edwardian Materialists. However, as George became king in May Woolf's date does not draw upon a significant political event in history, such as Wyndham Lewis' "Men of 1914" which explicitly draws upon the First World War to define an explicitly *male* modernism. Instead, December 1910 signifies the opening of Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibition in London — an event which shocked and outraged and, arguably, can be seen to represent the destruction of Victorian social and, importantly, sexual taboos. Woolf's date is consciously ambiguous and vague, "in or about December 1910"; not only is she rejecting the employment of a significant date in "History" to demarcate the change, she is refusing to fix it at all. The date alludes to Fry's exhibition but Woolf does not refer to it, rather it is an association made by subsequent readers. Woolf sees, and thus marks, the change in human character in far less tangible terms than a coronation or the opening of an art exhibition but the change she perceives is traced through literature. She names Samuel Butler and Bernard Shaw, before alluding to a change in domesticity and the Women's Suffrage movement. The change, like the date at which it is said to have occurred, is vague and ambiguous, remarkably indefinable yet the comment is made with striking certainty. So, despite there being a notable shift in human character which divides the Edwardians and Georgians, Woolf notes, novelists are unified in their continual "study of character".<sup>182</sup>

Woolf adheres to Bennett's opinion that good fiction is founded on the creation of convincing character to justify her own position, but she then goes on to turn it against Bennett in her interrogation of the Materialists' (mis)representation of character — it is Bennett's failure to see his characters and inability to refrain from imposing his own voice over theirs that drives Woolf's desire to destroy the literary conventions he, and the other Materialists, have left her. Of Bennett's characters, whose lives, costumes, and homes are described with such abundance, Woolf asks: "how do they live, and what do they live for"?<sup>183</sup> To illustrate Bennett's flawed characterisation Woolf examines the first few pages of his novel



*Hilda Lessways*, a novel which is “the first book that chance puts [her] way”.<sup>184</sup> Woolf’s critique of Bennett employs a clever juxtaposition of lengthy quotation and succinct, economical interjections as she considers “how he makes us feel that Hilda is real, true, and convincing, as a novelist should”.<sup>185</sup>

And so Woolf approaches the first few pages of *Hilda Lessways* which, she notes, illustrate the “soft, controlled way” Hilda shuts a door and how she “was fond of reading *Maud*”.<sup>186</sup> “But”, and here Woolf opens a new paragraph, “then [Bennett] begins to describe, not Hilda Lessways, but the view from her bedroom window” with “the excuse” that the rent-collector, Mr. Skellorn, “is on his way”.

<sup>187</sup> Following which Woolf opens her first lengthy quotation from Bennett’s *Hilda Lessways*:

The bailiwick of Turnhill lay behind her; and the murky districts of the Five Towns, of which Turnhill is the northern outpost, lay to the south. At the foot of Chatterley Wood the canal wound in large curves on its way towards the undefiled plains of Cheshire and the sea. On the canal-side, exactly opposite to Hilda’s window, was a flour-mill, that sometimes made nearly as much smoke as the kilns and the chimneys closing the prospect on either hand. From the flourmill a bricked path, which separated a considerable row of new cottages from their appurtenant gardens, led straight into Lessways Street, in front of Mrs Lessways’ house. By this path Mr. Skellorn should have arrived, for he inhabited the farthest of the cottages.<sup>188</sup>

This first quotation, all one hundred and twenty six words, is interrupted by Woolf who notes: “One line of insight would have done more than all those lines of description”; of the second, which is of similar length, Woolf inserts a celebratory interjection that “At last we are coming to Hilda herself. But not so fast ...” for Bennett is turning his eye upon Hilda’s house.<sup>189</sup> Woolf’s selection of lengthy quotation that fail to describe Hilda functions as acute imitations of the flaws she perceives in Bennett’s writing: fruitless description that reveal nothing of Hilda herself. The third, final and lengthiest of quotations is, literally, interrupted by Woolf who, tired of Bennett’s voice, does to him what he himself does to his own characters: Woolf imposes her own voice over and above Bennett’s final, incomplete sentence, “Suddenly Hilda heard her mother’s voice . . . ” by terminating the paragraph altogether and opening the next with the complaint: “But we cannot hear her mother’s voice, or Hilda’s voice; we can only hear Mr. Bennett’s voice telling us the facts about rents and freeholds and copyholds and fines.”<sup>190</sup> Woolf’s clever editing not only juxtaposes excess with economy but illustrates, with its



abrupt, mid-sentence interjection, the absence of the characters' own voices from the narrative. Woolf has produced an acute commentary of what it is that Bennett "might have done", let his characters speak, and, more explicitly, demonstrated what *she* "certainly could not do", ignore Hilda.<sup>191</sup> Woolf cannot allow the characters to be represented in such an indirect manner, but, more importantly, she cannot even continue with the quotation in which the characters' voices are refused, usurped by an authority on copyholds and freeholds. The violence of her interruption reflects the violence of the suppression in Bennett's writing. Woolf further undermines Bennett's imposed authorial authority with her "chance" selection of *Hilda Lessways* which, like the chance encounter with the eponymous Mrs Brown in her essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown", highlights Woolf's determination to differentiate her own writing from that of Bennett and the other Materialists.

Bennett and the Materialists have developed a "technique of novel-writing that suits their purpose", and of her Edwardian inheritance Woolf concludes: "But those tools are not our tools, and that business is not our business. For us those conventions are ruin, those tools are death".<sup>192</sup> In preoccupying themselves with "the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story" they have created a fiction of customs, from which "life escapes".<sup>193</sup> Fastidious attention to details such as the rents and freeholds has, Woolf argues, produced a fiction which enslaves the author, binds him to convention whilst life eludes him, as she goes on to illustrate through her tale of Mrs Brown which I shall return to shortly. It is this bondage that inspires in Woolf "a momentary doubt" and a "spasm of rebellion" as she declares "the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it".<sup>194</sup>

### **A Simple Story of Stylistic Imitation**

Woolf chooses to illustrate what it is that the Materialists did not do and what it is they did that she, most certainly, would not wish to do by employing satirical stylistic imitation, or what Genette termed "caricature": "caricature is an imitation in satiric mode whose primary function is derision."<sup>195</sup> Woolf recounts a:

simple story ... of a journey from Richmond to Waterloo, in the hope that I may show you what I mean by character in itself; that you may realise the different aspects it can wear; and the hideous perils that beset you directly you try to describe it in words.<sup>196</sup>



And so, Woolf presents four variations of her encounter with Mrs Brown, her own recollections and impressions as well as three versions each presenting her imitation of how the Materialists, Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett, would present their train journeys with Mrs. Brown. I shall return to Woolf's own story of Mrs Brown shortly, but for the moment I will consider Woolf's stylistic mimesis of the Materialists, paying particular attention to her imitation of Bennett.

Woolf first imitates Wells, producing a narrative which focuses on visions of a Utopian society:

a better, breezier, jollier, happier, more adventurous and gallant world [...], where miraculous barges bring tropical fruit to Camberwell by eight o'clock in the morning; where there are public nurseries, fountains, and libraries, dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, and marriages; where every citizen is generous and candid, manly and magnificent, and rather like Mr. Wells himself.<sup>197</sup>

Critically, in this account, the world is a place "where these musty railway carriages and fusty old women do not exist", and indeed, Mrs Brown does not exist as she is altogether absent save for the comment refusing her existence: "there are no Mrs Browns in Utopia."<sup>198</sup> In the imitation of Galsworthy, the narrative presents the world beyond the carriage, a grim industrial landscape of social injustice in contrast to the Wellsian Utopia. This version depicts factories filled with women making "twenty-five dozen earthenware pots" daily and the "mothers in the Mile End Road who depend on the farthings which those women earn. But there are the employers in Surrey who are even now smoking rich cigars while the nightingale sings".<sup>199</sup> Woolf notes how Galsworthy, like Wells, "would not waste a thought upon [Mrs Brown] as she is", but rather, "burning with indignation, stuffed with information, arraigning civilization, Mr. Galsworthy would only see in Mrs. Brown a pot broken on the wheel and thrown in the corner".<sup>200</sup> Mrs Brown is yet to be represented, she is yet to be seen, as Wells and Galsworthy fail to look at the person in front of them but only see a world beyond, whether idealised or in need of repair.

In Woolf's imitation of Bennett, by contrast, the narrative does look within the carriage, but Mrs Brown is merged into the fixtures and fittings. The Bennett variation observes:



the advertisements; the pictures of Swanage and Portsmouth; the way in which the cushion bulged between the buttons; how Mrs. Brown wore a brooch which had cost three-and-ten at Whitworth's Bazaar; and had mended both gloves — indeed the thumb on her left-hand glove had been replaced. And he would observe at length, how this was the non-stop train from Windsor which calls at Richmond for the convenience of middle-class residents, who can afford to go to the theatre but have not reached the social rank which can afford motor-cars, though it is true, there are occasions (he would tell us what), when they hire them from a company (he would tell us which).<sup>201</sup>

There is little in "Bennett's" description which affords any insight into Mrs Brown and so, one if left pondering, would he have been better advised to follow Wells' and Galsworthy's example and just glanced out of the window instead? The single "insight" "Bennett" affords the reader is that Mrs Brown "had been left a little copyhold, not freehold, property at Datchet, which, however, was mortgaged to Mr Bungay the solicitor".<sup>202</sup> This insight reveals a material detail of the woman sitting opposite, much like the observations of Mrs Brown's appearance. "Bennett", whilst perceiving his travelling companion, reveals nothing of Mrs Brown's character, instead, he uses the material to situate her within a given social class but, "with all his powers of observation, which are marvellous, with all his sympathy and humanity, which are great, Mr. Bennett has never once looked at Mrs. Brown".<sup>203</sup>

The Materialists fail to see Mrs Brown as an individual, but see her rather as a symbol (or symptom) of society, with Wells and Galsworthy specifically highlighting it as a society in need of repair. They each ignore her, "Wells" quite literally fails to notice her at all, "Galsworthy" only sees her as a broken pot in the corner whilst "Bennett", for all his detailed observations of her costume, espouses generalisations regarding the social status of train passengers — those "who can afford to go to the theatre but have not reached the social rank which can afford motor-cars".<sup>204</sup> It is through a direct comparison with Woolf's own anecdote and that which she produces in imitation of Bennett that the differences between a Materialist narration and her own is most apparent.

Woolf's "simple story" of Mrs Brown is most notable for its representation of the impressions, which "came pouring out like a draught ... myriads of irrelevant and incongruous ideas" crowding Woolf's head during her journey.<sup>205</sup> Woolf's tale is constructed of immediate impressions of the threadbare lady, snippets of Mrs



Brown's conversation with Mr Smith, and more significantly, moments of conjecture: "I felt she had nobody to support her", Woolf exclaims before imagining that Mrs Brown, "having been deserted, or left a widow, years ago ... had led an anxious, harried life, bringing up an only son, perhaps, who, as likely as not, was by this time beginning to go to the bad".<sup>206</sup> Woolf's insistence on recounting what impressions strike her own consciousness litter the passage, for instance, after observing Mrs Brown and Mr Smith converse:

It was plain, from Mrs. Brown's silence, from the uneasy affability with which Mr. Smith spoke, that he had some power over her which he was exerting disagreeably. It might have been her son's downfall, or some painful episode in her past life, of her daughter's.<sup>207</sup>

Within a few paragraphs Woolf has imagined scenarios for Mrs Brown, her son and/or daughter but, in contrast to Bennett, Woolf does not strive to demonstrate her own knowledge, rather she allows the impressions to drive the narrative which, by comparison, seems devoid of authorial intervention.

And so, upon Mr Smith's alighting at Clapham Junction, Woolf is saturated by the myriad impressions and incongruous ideas: she imagines a "seaside house" where Mrs Brown lived a "fantastic and secluded life", and so on until Woolf interrupts her impressions of social standing, familial history "— but details could wait".<sup>208</sup> Woolf's interruption foregrounds the difference between her style of writing and that of the Materialists, the details of her social standing, "she came of gentlefolks who kept servants", is not of consequence, "[t]he important thing was to realize her character, to steep oneself in her atmosphere".<sup>209</sup> And then "the story ends without any point to it", as Mrs Brown alighted and disappeared with her bag into the station with Woolf "never [to] know what became of her".<sup>210</sup>

Woolf, like Woolf's Bennett, addresses Mrs Brown's costume and considers the sort of property she may inhabit. Mrs Brown is, for Woolf, "one of those clean, threadbare old ladies whose extreme tidiness — everything buttoned, fastened, tied together, mended and brushed up — suggests more extreme poverty than rags and dirt".<sup>211</sup> Woolf notes the "mended" condition of Mrs Brown's clothing, but rather than detailing the repair she uses it to generate an insight into Mrs Brown. Arguably, both Woolf's and "Bennett's" observations associate Mrs Brown with a social class, but the former produces a commentary that subverts the normative —



Mrs Brown's fastidious tidiness and repairs, and not the actual clothing, inform Woolf of her extreme poverty more than the usual association of rags. Woolf has taken the material employed by "Bennett" and used it to comment on the nature of Mrs Brown. Similarly, Woolf brings property into her observations of Mrs Brown, but rather than commenting on the sort of property Mrs Brown's social status would afford her, a mortgaged copyhold (which says little about Mrs Brown and more about "Bennett's" knowledge), Woolf imagines a seaside cottage strewn with mementoes of an old lady's life. For Woolf, the material does not symbolise social status or present a symptom of an impoverished society, rather it inspires "overwhelming and peculiar" impressions, "[m]yriads of irrelevant and incongruous ideas" about the life and character of the person sitting opposite.<sup>212</sup> It is not the Materialists' focus on the material per se that offends Woolf but, as she goes on to explain, it is the manner in which the material is employed to supposedly illustrate character in fiction, or rather to neglect character altogether as her imitations of Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett would suggest.

**"But those tools are not our tools, and that business is not our business. For those conventions are ruin, those tools are death." [Woolf, MBMB, 104]**

Of her encounter with Mrs Brown, Woolf notes: "The incident made a great impression on me. But how was I to transmit that to you?"<sup>213</sup> The Edwardian convention would demand she "ascertain the rent ... the wages. Discover what her mother died of. Describe cancer. Describe calico. Describe ..." but Woolf, fearing it would have "dulled and tarnished and vanished" her vision of Mrs Brown, forever losing her amongst the calico, rejects such things: "The Edwardian tools are the wrong ones for us to use. They have laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things."<sup>214</sup> The Edwardians wrote of houses, which, Woolf acknowledges, whilst making them "worth living in" produced a fiction which was back-to-front: "novels are in the first place about people".<sup>215</sup> Novels should not be concerned with "the fabric of things" but with life, with human nature. Woolf states:

I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with character, and that it is to express character — not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of the novels, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic and alive, has been evolved.<sup>216</sup>



Woolf is explicitly distancing herself from the writings of the Materialists and the didactic fiction they wrote. Woolf does not wish to preach about the social inequalities and injustice like Galsworthy who burns “with indignation”, nor does she wish to celebrate the joys of the British Empire with Wells and the “miraculous barges that bring tropical fruit to Camberwell”.<sup>217</sup> For Woolf, the political should not be extracted from fiction, but it should not be there at the expense of character — for instance, Septimus Smith’s characterisation does not diminish because of Woolf’s political commentary on hysteria and patriarchy. Woolf does not desire to write novels “that leave one with so strange a feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction”, novels that demand one “join a society, or, more desperately, to write a cheque” in “order to complete them”.<sup>218</sup> And, perhaps worst of all, novels that “can be put upon the shelf, and need never be read again”.<sup>219</sup> Indeed, in a political critique of her own, Woolf dismisses the sort of political action these novels inspire as, like the novels themselves, the political causes can be put on a shelf and ignored.

Woolf perceives the Edwardian conventions as both restrictive and detrimental, impacting upon her experience as both a reader and a writer. The Materialist approach does not convey Mrs Brown as she sits opposite, and so, Woolf observes “the Georgian writer had to begin by throwing away the method that was in use at the moment”.<sup>220</sup> They must, she cries, at “whatever cost of life, limb, and damage to valuable property”, rescue Mrs Brown before she disappears forever, lost behind the Edwardian conventions dictating you ascertain such and such, describe this and that.<sup>221</sup> And so, Mrs Brown sits opposite Woolf and her contemporaries, refusing to be a symbol, or symptom, of society imprisoned within her mortgaged copyhold, demanding to be expressed in a new and unknown modern fiction and the Georgian writer is left to find a new, unknown way of conveying her.

**“And so the smashing and crashing began.” [Woolf, MBMB, 107]**

Woolf describes the situation as she and the Georgian writers attempt to free themselves of their Edwardian shackles so they may convey Mrs Brown “before the train stopped and she disappeared for ever”.<sup>222</sup>

Thus it is that we hear all around us, in poems and novels and biographies, even in newspaper articles and essays, the sound of breaking and falling, crashing and destruction. It is the prevailing sound of the Georgian age ...<sup>223</sup>



In "Modern Fiction" James Joyce, for instance, is celebrated for having discarded "most of the conventions" left to him by the Edwardians, and being "concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain".<sup>224</sup> Woolf returns to him, alongside Eliot, in "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" to illustrate smashing and crashing of literary convention, exclaiming how the former's "indecenty" and the latter's "obscurity" are symptoms of the Georgian age;<sup>225</sup> an age which Woolf argues, despite Bennett's remonstrations, is not one of "decay" but "a prelude to [something] more exciting".<sup>226</sup> Woolf continues to paint a picture of the Georgian age as one of aggressive experiment in which the "very foundations and rules of literary society" are destroyed, "violated", and "disintegrated" with "courage tremendous".<sup>227</sup> The violence of Woolf's language, her talk of breaking windows to breathe, only serves to reinforce the magnitude of the Edwardian bondage and the strength that she and her contemporaries need to found their own modern fiction.<sup>228</sup> It generates an impression of conflict, but one in which the suppressed struggles against the bounds of the dominant, of a move away from confinement towards freedom, a flight towards the fantastic. The difficulties she describes do not end with the smashing and crashing, but with the "season of failure and fragments", of finding the additional strength needed to continue writing in the "exhausted and chaotic condition".<sup>229</sup> Woolf's writing is not simply evoking Lewis and the "blasting and bombadiering" of an old tradition, rather, it depicts the creation, or birth, of something which demands continual effort to grow and develop. Woolf's image of Georgians "spinning madly through mid-air" as they forge a writing of their own impresses upon the reader a sense of difficult process: the writers "free-fall" uncontrollably in their quest for the new, as they fly towards a destination unknown, but wondrous all the same.<sup>230</sup> A fiction, she argues, which may capture the "thousands of emotions [that] have met, collided, and disappeared in astonishing disorder".<sup>231</sup> And so Woolf concludes, asking us to "tolerate the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure", in order that Mrs Brown, "the things she says and the things she does and her eyes and her nose and her speech and her silence", may never be deserted for, Mrs Brown "is, of course, the spirit we live by, life itself".<sup>232</sup>



# Woolf, Impressionism and Writing Modern Fiction

**“Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel.” [Woolf, MF, 106]**

If, as Woolf argues, “the task of the novelist [is] to convey this varying, unknown and uncircumscribed spirit” that is human nature, how does she herself achieve this? Woolf expresses disapproval of her own simple account of Mrs Brown, feeling that she had “let Mrs. Brown slip through her fingers” and “told [the reader] nothing whatever about her”,<sup>233</sup> but should one really be so dismissive of this story produced in the “season of failure and fragments”? Woolf’s anecdote depicts not a character, but “a character imposing itself upon another person”; Woolf is consumed by the impressions that come pouring from Mrs Brown like a draught, and, in doing so, supports her reading of the novel’s form as “so rich, elastic, and alive”.<sup>234</sup> Through Woolf’s impressions the clean, threadbare, little old lady comes to life:

everything buttoned, fastened, tidied together, mended and brushed up — suggests more extreme poverty than rags and dirt. There was something pinched about her — a look of suffering, of apprehension, and, in addition, she was extremely small. Her feet, in their clean little boots, scarcely touched the floor. I felt she had nobody to support her; that she had to make up her mind for herself; that, having been deserted, or left a widow, years ago, she had led an anxious, harried life ...<sup>235</sup>

Mrs Brown’s home, her family, her tribulations are all conveyed with each little mental meandering, and every little emotional journey returns us time and again to Mrs Brown. Even as she alights and disappears, leaving Woolf never to know what becomes of her, the novel’s form is evolving. Woolf, rather than continue with Mrs Brown until tragedy (possibly at the hands of Mr Smith) befalls her, or some other such form of normative closure, simply has Mrs Brown walk away out of the narrative, refusing the closure conventional novels demand. The “book” is most notably not closed on Mrs Brown and whilst the story ends with no point, it leaves the reader with a treasure trove of impressions as myriads of possibilities crowd into their head. This refusal of imposing conventional closure marks another point of departure from the Materialists and reinforces the distinction be-



tween Bennett's all-consuming voice and Woolf's own refusal to impose herself on her characters: in not closing Mrs Brown's narrative on her behalf Woolf has allowed her silence to speak volumes as the unresolved story continues to generate impressions upon the reader.

For Woolf "life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged", rather "life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end".<sup>236</sup> Woolf demands a fiction representative of life, that "unknown and uncircumscribed spirit", one which captures "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" and the "myriad impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel" it receives.<sup>237</sup> Woolf proposes a modern fiction which focuses upon experience, particularly internalised elements such as fleeting impressions, unspoken thoughts, and resurfacing memories:

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.<sup>238</sup>

Woolf's conceptualisation of what fiction should be is clearly in opposition to that of the Materialists as quantifiable, physical and material details are usurped by the transitory, disconnected thoughts and feelings as they are experienced and, significantly, not reordered into a fully coherent narrative. It is not simply the Edwardians' literary conventions from which Woolf wishes to free herself as a writer, she also wishes to free fiction from the Materialists determination to impose their ideals of coherency onto the disconnected patterns life presents. Woolf concludes her manifesto for a modern fiction with the following, reiterating her rejection of the Edwardian Materialists and the conventions they impose upon her, as a writer, and upon fiction itself:

'The proper stuff of fiction' does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss. And if we can imagine the art of fiction come alive and standing in our midst, she would undoubtedly bid us break her and bully her, as well as honour and love her, for so her youth is renewed and her sovereignty assured.<sup>239</sup>

Woolf's modern fiction, like the life it seeks to represent, never stops evolving, never stops breaking conventions in order that she may be recreated, anew, fresh, original and free from bondage.



## Fragments and Impressions

What emerges from reading Woolf's writing on modern fiction and Woolf's modern(ist) fiction is the central role she affords impressions. Woolf determines how important it is to consider how character, and the world in general, impresses itself on the ordinary mind; how, on an ordinary day, these impressions fall from all sides, an incessant shower that envelops us in its luminous halo; how novelists should capture the flickerings of the "innermost flame" or, rather, how they should strive to relay something more than a detailed knowledge of a character's social and economical status; all of which she illustrates with a simple story, a story deliberately ambiguous, consciously vague which refuses closure, rejects authority, and refutes a uniform wholeness. Woolf's writings, both as essayist and novelist, demonstrate a connection with the writings of two Impressionists, Monet and Ford, and it is this connection which allows us to escape the restrictive theorising of modernism, whilst similarly offering a way to conceive of the stylistic imitation of Woolf's writing when adapted to the medium of film.

Woolf's essays "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" form what can be best described as her "manifesto" for a modern(ist) fiction, a manifesto which presents a number of similarities with that of another: Ford Madox Ford's "On Impressionism", a two part essay on literary Impressionism, published in 1914. The essays also bear a striking similarity to the writings of Claude Monet in a series of personal letters he wrote to (amongst others) his wife, Alice, during the periods in spent in Rouen capturing the cathedral (Spring 1892 and, again, in 1893) and, later, in London (February and March in 1900 and 1901). In considering the Impressionist qualities to Woolf's writings I am able to consider the form of her writing beyond the boundaries established by those, such as Eliot, Lewis and the New Critics, whose early definitions of modernism made an all but exclusively *male* modernism which featured Woolf as a "token woman writer" in order to contrast her feminine<sup>240</sup> (unauthorised) modernism with a male (authorised) modernism. Significantly, I am returning to Scott's web of attachments between modernist writers, and introducing (or rather opening the way to introduce, for I have not the space to do so here) a means of celebrating stylistic connections between the writers. Interestingly, in her web representing associations between modernist writers Scott traced a connection between Ford and Rebecca West; by turning to style I am able to introduce a new connection between Woolf and Ford.



This notion of a stylistic relationship, as noted earlier, will be employed when examining the relationship between source novel and film adaptation.

Ford Madox Ford wrote extensively on literary Impressionism: in addition to "On Impressionism" Ford's other key publication was *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*, which was published by Woolf's step-brother, Gerald Duckworth in 1924, the same year Woolf delivered the paper which became the "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" essay to the *Heretics*. Whilst the temporal associations situate literary Impressionism, Ford, and Woolf at the centre of the modernist period, all three were forced to occupy a peripheral position in relation to the canon. Martin Stannard notes how Ford, like Woolf, was often "overshadowed by his contemporaries", particularly those whom "Ford had often actively assisted: Conrad, Lawrence, Frost, Crane, Wyndham Lewis, Pound, H.D., [and] Hemingway".<sup>241</sup> Stannard's list juxtaposes authorised modernists, such as Pound and Lewis, alongside outsiders such as H.D., as well as (usefully) introducing a broader modernist period to that of 1914, or 1922; Stephen Crane's most significant work, *The Red Badge of Courage*, was published in 1895 and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* appeared shortly after in 1899, the same year Hemingway was born. Stannard reinforces the need to move away from relying upon individual men, or publications, to theorise modernism and, through his comments on Ford's relationship with others, highlights the centrality of a literary culture founded upon collaborations, echoing Scott's sentiments.

Ford retrospectively, and somewhat contentiously, identified literary circles into which he, then, situated himself as a leading figure (arguably, Lewis' "Men of 1914" may be determined as doing the same thing — *Blasting and Bombadiering* was published in 1937 — but his label, and his own leading role, has only been questioned in recent years with the *refiguring* of modernism and the modernist canon.) The Impressionist circles were most notably celebrated in Ford's posthumous biography of Conrad (many have accused Ford of portraying his role in their working relationship as more influential than it actually was — obviously Conrad, himself, was unable to comment) and his manifesto "On Impressionism" post-dates the end of another of Ford's collaborative relationships, for Stephen Crane died in 1900. Ford co-opted a series of writers into his own movement many years after its initial emergence and was heavily criticised for doing so, especially by those linked to Conrad. Ford was accused of parasitically gleaning legitimacy for



his movement and this was, in turn, used to discredit Ford and his writings, thus shunting literary Impressionism to the periphery of literary criticism.<sup>242</sup> By contrast, Woolf envisioned herself as being distinctly outside these literary circles. Lee, as quoted above when discussing the publication of Woolf's "Character in Fiction", suggests that Woolf was acutely aware of a division inherent in literary modernism, a fissure not readily recognised (or, rather deliberately ignored) by leading figures in literary criticism till half a century or more later. Eliot's essay celebrates a series of male poets and sees Eliot situating himself within a tradition of masculine writers that he desires to redevelop and re-master (Eliot, unlike Ford, is not criticised for this). Eliot is placed within an already existing discourse whereas Woolf positions herself in isolation from her literary forebears as she demands writers smash literary traditions and produce a new modern fiction. Woolf was keenly in tune with literature and her own relation (as a woman) to it, with Lee's biography demonstrating Woolf's own astonishing awareness, or a premonitory foresight, of her unjustified position outside literary modernism. Unlike Eliot, who found sanctitude in a celebrated circle of masculine authorship, and Ford who founded his own circles, Woolf found herself facing the unknown, alone, despite, on occasion, being the token female modernist.<sup>243</sup>

Literary Impressionism, like the circles of feminine modernism, has struggled to gain the attention it warrants because it was unable to situate itself within an already established tradition. However, regardless of the questions surrounding Ford's Impressionist circles, literary Impressionism presents us with a new mode of fiction from a less explicitly established web of literary collaborations, collaborations which were overshadowed (perhaps, even, actively belittled) by the privileging of a masculine modernism. This study is not concerned with validating the web of Impressionism in terms of collaborative, working relationships, rather it seeks to establish a web of stylistic relationships, of shared ideas regarding a new, modern fiction.

In "On Impressionism" Ford sought to redress literary Impressionism's negative reception, such as the criticism he notes of a "Futurist friend" who dismissed it as being "so much trouble as not to be worth while", a criticism which echoes the struggles Woolf herself seems to have experienced.<sup>244</sup> Others, Ford suggests, objected to the Impressionist aesthetic of "producing an illusion", but the centrality of mimesis to literature implies that illusion, whether realist or Impressionist, is omnipresent.<sup>245</sup> Of particular note is how, for Ford, Impressionist



writing rejects the “sort of rounded, annotated record of a set of circumstances”, in which a long speech is rendered verbatim; rather, “Impressionism is a thing altogether momentary”, which “exists to render those queer effects of real life” such as “speaking to one person” whilst being “haunted by the memory or desire for another”.<sup>246</sup> Ford’s espousing of a mode of fiction which is altogether momentary reflects the fleeting quality central to Woolf’s own theory of writing fiction: “Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit”?<sup>247</sup> One cannot fail to note the comparison between Ford’s critique of the “rounded, annotated record” and Woolf’s own rejection of the Materialists’ obsessions with factual reporting and historical determination, a strategy which wholly failed to present human nature. This mutual depreciation of the Edwardian writers, who are not as explicitly named by Ford as they are by Woolf, is furthered when Ford similarly denounces narratorial authority: “the Impressionist author is sedulous to avoid letting his personality appear”.<sup>248</sup> For Ford, as for Woolf, the impressions of the observer, whether they are the narrator or not, should come to the fore and the dominant, all-knowing authorial voice should be eradicated, silenced. Ford again expresses similar sentiments to Woolf as he renounces the writing of novels that “preach doctrines”, declaring that “the artist can never write to satisfy himself ... He must not write propaganda”, nor should they write to improve or influence his reader, or society.<sup>249</sup>

Ford determines that the Impressionist “will only record his impression of a long speech”, a strategy Woolf’s narrator employs throughout “An Unwritten Novel”: for instance, the scene over dinner between Minnie and her brother’s family is reduced to a few lines encased within square parentheses as the narrator determines to “Skip, skip, skip” over all but a minor incident in which Minnie’s shudder is disparagingly observed by her brother and his wife.<sup>250</sup> Ford illustrates his argument with an (imagined) anecdote of hearing a man’s prolonged speech about the state of his lunch, arguing that rather than remembering the speech verbatim, one will remember snippets of the speech, interjected with several blanks, observations of the “gentleman’s starting eyes”, thoughts of how “your boots were too tight” and that “you were trying, in your under mind, to arrange a meeting with some lady . . .”.<sup>251</sup> Ford’s story both echoes Woolf’s sentiment of incessant showers of atoms and of thousands of ideas and emotions colliding and her employment of such strategies in her own fiction: “An Unwritten Novel” and the



story of Mrs Brown both feature narrators whose spontaneous histories of their fellow passengers leap between various times and places.

Woolf and Ford, therefore, both rejected the uniform, rounded literature produced by their predecessors, seeking instead to capture the momentary and the fleeting in their writing. The late-nineteenth century artist Claude Monet, amongst others such as Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir and Édouard Manet, led the Impressionist movement which was named after a painting Monet exhibited in 1874 titled "Impression Sunrise". The Impressionist artist is concerned with capturing "the visual impression made by a scene" and is "characteristically absorbed by the play of light on a scene", determining to "in Monet's words [create] a spontaneous work rather than a calculated one".<sup>252</sup> This rejection of a calculated work in favour of something more spontaneous is much like Woolf's own rejection of the Edwardian writers' imposed authority in favour of, as Ford describes it, a "thing altogether momentary". All three strove to distance themselves from producing a piece of work that was overtly constructed and to minimise the appearance of an author; rather, they desired to create a work in which the subject, not the artist, determined its representation.

Monet experimented with light and colour in his attempt to capture the momentary image a subject impresses on the mind, often returning to the same subject in order that he might capture it at different times of the day; for instance, Monet's series of paintings of Rouen Cathedral offered many different perspectives of one spatial position. Richard Kendall explains: "Monet had come to accept that a single canvas could never do justice to his chosen motif and that every shift in the sunlight or the quality of the atmosphere presented him, in effect, with a new subject."<sup>253</sup> Rouen Cathedral was not, itself, the subject of the painting, rather, it is the impressions of the cathedral as generated by variations in the weather and seasons, as this letter written during the period he spent painting Rouen cathedral demonstrates: "Fourteen paintings today, it's unprecedented ... the lighting is changing quite drastically; gone is the oblique light of February, everyday it gets whiter and higher up."<sup>254</sup> Monet's desire to capture the fleeting impressions, "one marvel after another, each lasting less than five minutes",<sup>255</sup> which Kendall refers to as "the artist's experience",<sup>256</sup> is a sentiment shared by Woolf: the myriad impressions which fall incessantly and from all directions, like the atmospheric marvels Monet sought to capture, are "trivial, fantastic, evanescent".<sup>257</sup> Monet and Woolf both sought to relinquish the sense of authority that they saw others impos-



ing upon their respective art forms: Monet by representing a single subject in a number of “naturalistic” conditions regardless of weather or time of day, depicting a subject in rain, fog, at dawn, or dusk; Woolf determined to extract the authorial voice from her work, choosing to have the reader extract the information from the impressions she relayed as opposed to choosing a narrator whose omnipotence was designed to mould and determine the reader’s response. For both artists, it was important to capture their experience for others to share, but not to impose their experience over and above all else.

Monet’s painterly impressionism and Ford’s literary Impressionism that followed are both concerned with the momentary, moving away from the objective subject — whether the architecture of a cathedral or a conversation recounted verbatim — towards something wholly subjective; for Monet this involved experimenting not with composition but with transitions in colour and led to the rejection of an individual, whole work of art in favour of a series of paintings, which, when viewed as a series, illustrate more fully the nature of Monet’s painterly impressionism, highlighting the atmospheric transitions Monet fought to capture. Monet’s painting echoes the sentiments expressed by Scott in her rejection of earlier definitions of modernism — neither celebrate the individual but instead illustrate the value of relations and the celebration of difference.

### **Mrs Norman and “An Unwritten Novel”: Woolf’s Impression-Driven Modernism**

Rachel Bowlby, in *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations*, discusses “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”, and comments how the “theme of transport and movement makes way for the contrast with the stationary quality of the Edwardian writers’ preoccupation with the house”.<sup>258</sup> Woolf’s stylistic imitation of Bennett draws upon the bulging cushions, the posters, a mended glove and a mortgaged copyhold, and neglects the sense of motion that Woolf’s own account provides: she foregrounds the journey Mrs Brown is making, Richmond to Waterloo, comments on how the train passes through stations and informs us how Mr Smith alights at Clapham. The scene, both within and without the carriage is in a state of flux. The train journey becomes synonymous with the transition between two modes of fiction: the Edwardians focus on the material, what is static, whereas Woolf presents the transitory; her impressions, like Mrs Brown, are fleeting.



In January 1920 Woolf wrote the short story "An Unwritten Novel", "a story about an attempt to invent a story, of a woman seen in conversation on the train".<sup>259</sup> The story, as its title suggests, clearly distinguishes Woolf's writing from that of her literary forebears: the oxymoron firmly rejects the authority of the sort of novel written by those authors who would, as David Bradshaw explains, have regarded its exploration of the fragmentary as "simply too insubstantial, uninteresting, or ephemeral".<sup>260</sup> Two years later another fictional scene depicting how one character imposes themselves on their fellow train traveller appeared: *Jacob's Room* features a scene between Jacob and Mrs Norman, sharing a carriage together on their way to Cambridge.<sup>261</sup> The Mrs Brown scene, which did not appear for a further two years, is described by Bowlby as being "specifically concerned with the lack of certainty and lurking strangeness in an ordinary train journey",<sup>262</sup> Bowlby continues by arguing that the essay saw Woolf not only "questioning the very notion of straightforward directions and known destinations" favoured by the Edwardian writers, but also subverting their authority by refusing to formalise and define an alternative form of novel-writing.<sup>263</sup> Bowlby's study aligns Woolf's writing with a train journey, suggesting that the Mrs Brown anecdote is an allegory for the journey the Georgian writers are making: they are departing from the Edwardian mode of novel-writing but they are yet to determine their destination, yet to identify how they are to write novels. Woolf's refusal to outline her alternative mode of writing is not simply subverting the Edwardian need to explain and identify, to record and report the facts, it is shifting the focus of writing: Woolf's writing, her fiction, is not about the journey itself, its destination, the time and point of departure, rather the focus is upon the experience of the journey, of the impressions Mrs Brown inspires and of capturing these fleeting moments in fiction.

Woolf's *Jacob's Room* employs a mode of narration that destabilises the straightforward and authoritative narration of Bennett into something wholly more elastic. The novel's narration is far from conventional: the focalisation continually shifts, featuring, amongst others, the protagonist's mother, his close friends and occasional lovers, as well as incidental characters, such as Mrs Norman, who appears briefly during a train journey to Cambridge. The narrative voices are not always contained within the diegesis, on occasions the narrative voice transcends the diegetic world to produce an extradiegetic commentary on both the diegesis and the mode of representation. The novel juxtaposes this shifting and highly sub-



jective narration driven by intradiegetic impressions with a self-reflective contemplation of the novel's form, questioning its own narration and, thus, bringing to fore the limitations of any novel's narration and authority. The scene between Jacob and Mrs Norman exemplifies this, as well as highlighting how it is Woolf sought to "capture" human nature.

During the scene the narration fluctuates between presenting the impressions (and afterthoughts) of Mrs Norman as she observes her fellow passenger, as shown below, and the extradiegetic commentary on the nature of capturing a person's character.

Taking note of socks (loose), of tie (shabby), she once more reached his face. She dwelt upon his mouth. The lips were shut. The eyes bent down reading. All was firm, yet youthful, indifferent, unconscious — as for knocking one down! NO, no no! She looked out of the window, smiling silently now, and then came back again, for he didn't notice her.<sup>264</sup>

Mrs Norman formulates her impression of Jacob's character from his socks (loose), tie (shabby), and youthful indifference, concluding from that "infallible test of appearance" that Jacob was not one of those "dangerous" men whom she should fear travelling alone with.<sup>265</sup> In contrast to the explicit description of Mrs Brown's mended thumb of the left-hand glove, the condition of Jacob's clothing is represented in an altogether different manner: the detail is noted after the item, in the form of a single-word descriptive contained within parentheses. This creates the sense that the "shabby" state of Jacob's tie is an afterthought, the rhetoric imitating the tone typically associated with a mother and/or elderly lady. In addition to offering an insight into the observee's character, and thus distinguishing the intradiegetic narrative voice from the extradiegetic commentary, Woolf's strategic employment of free indirect discourse presents both the observation and the act of observation. I will return to Woolf's employment of free indirect discourse in *Mrs Dalloway*, in which the multiple focalisers continually shift and instances are presented repeatedly, disrupting the novel's temporality and narrative authority.

Mrs Norman's focalisation is interrupted by the focalisation of an unknown, omniscient narrator whose narration conventionally provides a generalised view of the scene and the actions of the characters, as well as presenting us with a character's internal monologue which, as we have seen above, Woolf complicates by playing with grammar and syntax, in this instance, parentheses.<sup>266</sup> The extradi-



egetic narration also introduces a questioning commentary on the nature of narrative and narration, and by doing so Woolf subverts the Edwardian writers' literary conventions in two ways: first, the reliability of Mrs Norman is quizzed and, second, the broader notion of narration and how to capture character is examined: "Nobody sees any one as he is, let alone an elderly lady sitting opposite a strange young man in a railway carriage. They see a whole — they see all sorts of things — they see themselves."<sup>267</sup> For Woolf, impressions are as much influenced by the life and experiences of the impressed as it is by the impresser. The insinuation that people's own lives colour how they see others brings into question the authoritative narrative voice favoured by the Edwardian novelist, returning us to Woolf's notion that, for instance, the Edwardian writers perceived Mrs. Brown as a symptom of an unhealthy society in need of repair. As the following demonstrates, Woolf further subverts Edwardian authoritative narration by actively engaging the reader in a question of reliability:

One must do the best one can with her report. Anyhow, this was Jacob Flanders, aged nineteen. It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet exactly what is done.<sup>268</sup>

The first sentence explicitly references Mrs Norman and Woolf uses her to further her critique of the Materialists: Mrs Norman is reading Jacob in the same fashion as the characters are presented in the fiction produced by the Edwardian writers, and as such relies upon facts to produce a summation of "Jacob Flanders, aged nineteen". The sudden insertion of Jacob's full name and age returns us to the Materialists who determined to fix their characters with social descriptors. Bowlby notes how Woolf associated "historical determination" with the Edwardians and, thus, sought to expose "the blandness of factual records" and question "the possibility of anything like confident ordering, listing and chronicling".<sup>269</sup> The "factual record" sits awkwardly in the passage and fails to reveal anything more than Mrs Norman's own subjective "report". The omniscient narrator's following comments reinforce Woolf's position, disregarding the act of "summing people up" in favour of an altogether more transient quality of capturing character. Woolf is rejecting her own authorial authority on the grounds that to attempt to "sum up" her characters is futile, instead she chooses to present her reader with hints, fragmented impressions, and invites them to bring their own experiences to the construction of character in fiction. The ambivalence of the narrator's "not exactly" this or that



serves as a conscious refutation of the factual report and the privileging of the momentary is foregrounded in the closing sentence of the Mrs Norman passage: “this sight of her fellow-passenger was completely lost in her mind, as the crooked pin dropped by the child into the wishing-well twirls in the water and disappears forever”.<sup>270</sup>

### **Impressions of An Unwritten Novel**

“An Unwritten Novel”, whilst not featured in Bowlby’s discussion of Woolf’s thematic employment of train journeys in her study *Feminist Destinations*, returns us to Bowlby’s comments on “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” being concerned with a “lack of certainty”, a rejection of the Edwardian straightforward narration which presents us with a subversion of narrative wholeness and narratorial authority. The title, as Christopher Reed comments, “is significant of an authorial crisis”, a crisis within literature that Woolf herself implies in her request for a reader’s patience with the “season of failures and fragments”.<sup>271</sup> The story’s subversion of the Edwardian conventions and their insistence upon imposing their own authorial control is an interesting one, and it is more than the formal one which a synopsis of the story suggests: the narrator, inspired by a witnessed conversation, conjectures the life of a female passenger seated opposite, a lonely spinster at odds with the world and her family, only to have her “truth” undermined when the passenger is greeted by her son upon alighting the train.<sup>272</sup> The story, then, literally undermines the Edwardian literary conventions by having its narrator’s authority exposed as nothing other than fiction, an authority that, once lost, is celebrated by the narrator who exclaims: “Mysterious figures! Mother and son. Who are you? ... it’s you, unknown figures, you I adore; if I open my arms, it’s you I embrace, you I draw to me — adorable world!”<sup>273</sup>

The narrator’s fictionalised truth of her fellow passenger, for whom she invents the name Minnie Marsh, draws upon the various impressions generated from her observations of Minnie reading *The Times* and a discussion the pair have “of stations and holidays, of brothers at Eastbourne, and the time of year”, and of Minnie’s sister-in-law.<sup>274</sup> The narrator envisions Minnie arriving at her brother’s, an unwanted guest who interrupts dinner and is eventually shown to her room in the attic where she gazes across “the roofs of Eastbourne — zigzagging roofs like the spines of caterpillars, this way, that way, striped red and yellow, with blue-black



slating".<sup>275</sup> The description of the rooftop scene is highly impressionistic, there is no Materialist description of the sort of buildings such roofs would be fashioned for, rather, the rhetoric is quite simplistic, like that of a child. The narration provides a subversive imitation of a Materialist narration; an elliptical account of the meal and Minnie's removal to her attic room (ending with the previous quotation) is encased in square parentheses which open as follows: "But this we'll skip; ornaments, curtains, trefoil china plate, yellow oblongs of cheese, white squares of biscuit — skip."<sup>276</sup> The social standing of Minnie's brother and sister-in-law, which Bennett would have established through the sort of biscuits served upon the trefoil china plate, is irrelevant to the narrator's tale of Minnie; first, the only "details" that matter are that Minnie is an outsider, and second, the narrator has such faith in her story she does not need to reinforce her authority with material details.

The story is littered with references to involuntary fidgeting and twitching, one of which appears in the elliptical narration noted above: Minnie experiences a shudder of which "Hilda disapproves. 'Why *should* she twitch?' Skip, skip," and the narrative is forced onwards and upwards to Minnie's attic room.<sup>277</sup> One cannot avoid the allusion to Bertha Mason — the madwoman in the attic — which reinforces the narrator's construction of Minnie as an hysterical figure. Interestingly, it is the hysteric's somatic symptoms that form a bond between the narrator and Minnie in the early pages of the story. Following her exclamation "'Oh that cow!'" regarding her sister-in-law, Minnie retreats from her conversation with the narrator, occupying herself with the rubbing of *that damn'd spot* on the window pane — "some stain, some indelible contamination" — an action that not only alludes to another famous literary hysteric, Lady Macbeth, but one which the narrator mirrors upon the discovery of a speck on the window beside her.<sup>278</sup> The notion of the unspoken bond between hysterics is something Woolf returns to in *Mrs Dalloway*. Although the novel's "hysterics" Clarissa and Septimus never meet, the bond between them is certain, and one which is explored by Cunningham in *The Hours*, in which hysterical bonds are forged across temporal and spatial divides. In "An Unwritten Novel", then, the narrator connects with Minnie through their mutual preoccupation with a couple of specks on a train window and it is through this hysterical bond that Minnie's character is impressed upon the narrator with such strength that the narrator deciphers her secret and sees Minnie's life. This introduction of hysterical bonds highlights the distance between Woolf's writing and



that of the Edwardians — those appreciators of historical determination and factual records are synonymous with the “scientific people” who both sum-up Minnie’s condition as a result of “her sex” and the authoritarian doctors in *Mrs Dalloway*, Holmes and Bradshaw, who drive Septimus to suicide.<sup>279</sup> Woolf is not simply concerned with the imposed narratorial authority but the imposed authority of patriarchal society. “An Unwritten Novel” is explicitly refuting the patriarchal authority with which the Edwardian Materialists are synonymous — her female narrator cannot bond with Minnie until the male passengers have departed, and their connection is not fully expressed until they both rub at stains on the window.

And so, in an attempt to determine the root of Minnie’s hysterical rubbing, the narrator turns her attention to Minnie’s “crime”, producing a fragmented history of Minnie who, having lingered at the draper’s shop was late to return home, too late: “Neighbours — the doctor — baby — brother — kettle — scalded — hospital — dead — or only the shock of it, the blame?”<sup>280</sup> Minnie, like her Shakespearean forebear, is responsible for another’s death and it is this crime that has driven her to hysteria. The narration produces an acute imitation of the experience of the moment and the reader is left with the feeling that Minnie has recounted her traumatic experience. The description of the event is reduced to the barest of details, the hyphenated spacing of the sentence quite literally leaving “blanks” in the account. This strategy does not simply invite the reader to “fill it out” with their own imagination, it all but demands it of them. The narration, in contrast to that of the Edwardians, actively draws the reader into the formation of Minnie’s character. The narratorial authority favoured by the Edwardian writers is usurped by a modern relationship which repositions the roles of both narrator and reader in the construction of Minnie’s history and her character.

The fragmented narration of Minnie’s history also suggests the experience of recollecting that traumatic history. The scene is rushed over, reduced to little more than a list of players, thus evoking the sense that it is either too unbearable to recount, or, quite simply, that the event has been all but eradicated from Minnie’s memory, leaving behind a few “indelible” spots. The notion of post-traumatic stress disorder is quite commonplace today, but is one that had, contemporary to Woolf’s writing, only recently been circulated as a theory. This was brought to the fore of cultural consciousness when soldiers returning from the horror of the trenches in World War One exhibited a number of symptoms which were termed



“shell-shock”, as I shall discuss in more detail in the following chapter. Freud was one of the main proponents of such theories of hysteria-related illnesses and his theories of psychoanalysis were becoming increasingly well-known throughout Woolf’s lifetime. Freud’s writings on hysteria, most notably the “Dora” case, declare that the hysteric’s somatic symptoms are expressions of a repressed trauma, something which cannot be spoken. It is not necessary for this study to trace whether the story is drawing upon Freudian psychoanalysis, (I shall maintain the narrator’s rejection of “the scientific people” who insist on imposing their own labels onto the patient<sup>281</sup>) it is sufficient to draw the comparison, especially since the narrator declares: “the details matter nothing! It’s what she carries with her; the spot, the crime, the thing to expatiate,” again, it is the experience which is being brought to the fore and the impressions one character makes upon another.<sup>282</sup> And, much like the Mrs Brown anecdote, “An Unwritten Novel” ends with “Minnie” alighting the train carriage to be greeted by the children the narrator determined she did not have. Woolf, therefore, has not simply produced an impression-driven tale but one in which the narrative created is disproven. Mrs Brown’s departure forced the narrative to remain incomplete, whereas Minnie’s departure refuses closure in its refutation of the narrator’s version of her life story. Minnie’s is a fragmented narrative in which the ending brings more questions than answers and, remarkably, says more about the narrator than the protagonist.

### ***Mrs Dalloway: a Myriad Impressions***

“An Unwritten Novel” foregrounds the importance of the impression in the construction or representation of character as the character of Minnie Marsh is consciously mis-constructed in order to demonstrate how integral the impression is to our own formulation of others’ characters. In *Mrs Dalloway* the impression is intrinsic to the novel’s characterisation; it is as revealing of the character being impressed as those from whom the impression emanates: for instance, how Peter Walsh observes a pretty girl in the park is as indicative of his own character as Clarissa Dalloway’s observations of his penknife fiddling. I will return to this dual function of the impression in the next chapter when I discuss characterisation in more detail – character is of particular interest when addressing Cunningham’s adaptation in the fifth chapter. For the moment I wish to examine Woolf’s employment of multiple narrative voices and impressions and how *Mrs Dalloway*



maintains Woolf's rejection of the Edwardian literary conventions. I will produce a detailed analysis of one key scene from the novel and the central role of the impression, I will return to this same scene when examining Gorris' film adaptation in chapter four in order to consider the adaptation proper of Woolf's impressionism.

The series of, or myriad, impressions Woolf discussed in "Modern Fiction" is most notably illustrated in *Mrs Dalloway* with the infamous appearance of the sky-writer over London. Woolf chooses to depict the sky-writer and its message through the eyes of a variety of peripheral characters, of whom most do not appear elsewhere in the narrative – they are, quite literally, passers-by in the narrative and narration. Woolf's impression-driven account of the sky-writer and her employment of multiple and, supposedly, inconsequential narrative points of view is a skilful subversion of the Edwardian authoritarian narration which Woolf railed against in her critical writing. In *Mrs Dalloway* fleeting characters and fleeting impressions merge to create a narrative of ambiguity and uncertainty – just what, exactly, is the sky-writer's message? And, significantly, is the message itself really of any importance? (As important as a mended glove from Whitworth's Bazaar . . .)

A group of women congregate outside the gates of Buckingham Palace waiting to catch a glimpse of the Queen (or is it the Prince of Wales?), but they are briefly distracted when a sky-writer scrawls an advertisement for toffee in the sky "(and the car went in at the gates and nobody looked at it)".<sup>283</sup> The scene traverses central London as the narrative jumps from one observer to another: Mrs Coates spies the plane and discusses it with Mrs Bletchley outside Buckingham Palace; in Regent's Park Lucrezia Smith sees it and mentions it to her husband Septimus, who then overhears a nursemaid spelling the message out loud; it is then noted separately by Mrs Dempster and Mr Bentley before Clarissa Dalloway, having arrived home, questions what the crowds are looking at before closing the door on them – an act that marks the end of the sky-writer's presence in the narrative. The scene is constructed in a fragmented manner, not only moving between the differing impressions of the sky-writer and its message, but crossing temporal and spatial boundaries as, for instance, the sky-writer's engines direct Septimus to his memories of trench warfare and the loss of a comrade in World War One. This strategy reinforces Woolf's conceptualisation of a modern fiction constructed from



a series of “fleeting moments” as opposed to a single, linear experience favoured by conventional narratives.

The sky-writer appears when Mrs Coates’ Buckingham Palace vigil is interrupted by the “sound of an aeroplane [which] bored ominously into the ears of the crowd”;<sup>284</sup> the emphasis is immediately placed upon the myriad impressions generated, as it is the ears of a crowd, and not just of Mrs Coates, that the noise falls upon. The subversion of a singular, linear narration is furthered as the fragmented impressions are woven together to form a web of questions, as opposed to creating a whole report of the sky-writer’s activities: “But what letters? A C was it? an E, then an L?”<sup>285</sup> The sky-writer is personified through the onlookers’ impressions who perceive it moving “swiftly, freely, like a skater”, or “a dancer”.<sup>286</sup> The fluidity of the imagery of the sky-writer and its message mirrors the manner in which the impressions flow between the characters: Mrs Coates, who reads “Blaxo”, to Mrs Blexley, who sees “Kreemo”, and to Mr Bowley who notes it says “Toffee” reinforces Woolf’s rejection of a singular, solid form of narration. The rejection is finalised with Woolf’s parenthesised inclusion of an extradiegetic commentary regarding a car driving through the gates of Buckingham Palace unnoticed by the crowd gathered there in anticipation of witnessing such an event. (The car, which was witnessed backfiring earlier by the passers-by on Bond Street, is believed to be, variously, “the Prince of Wales’s, the Queen’s, the Prime Minister’s”.<sup>287</sup>) The sudden insertion of an extradiegetic commentary reinforces Woolf’s rejection of the Edwardian narratorial authority as its simple reporting detracts from the impressions, producing an undesirable interruption to the scene. The narration also strategically foregrounds the absence of this (grand) event from the narrative; the fact that the car goes unnoticed is foregrounded by the narration rather than the event of a car passing through the gates of Buckingham Palace – similarly, the passenger’s identity remains undisclosed, a conscious refusal of the linear closure an Edwardian narrative would produce. And, to further the juxtaposition of the extraordinary with the ordinary, both car and sky-writer simultaneously vanish from the narrative, the car (with its potentially grand passenger) behind the gates of Buckingham Palace, followed by the sky-writer: “It had gone; it was behind the clouds. There was no sound.”<sup>288</sup> Notably the sky-writer’s disappearance, in contrast to the car, does not absent it from the narrative, it remains present in the narration through Mr Bowley’s contemplation of the letters it leaves behind:



The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was — a mission of the greatest importance.<sup>289</sup>

The narration's portrayal of the smoke-letters floating away in the sky not only contrasts with the unnoticed presence of the car, but introduces a fantastical element to the scene which draws upon Woolf's critical writing discussing the "fleeting moment". The narrative barely represents the actual message, the letters are mentioned only in passing, rather it is dominated by the poetic description of the clouds, a celebration of the free, the unfixed and the unknown. The cloud's imagined important mission is suggestive of the sort of heroic adventure undertaken by the likes of Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain, as the impression reflects the reading tastes of the impressed. Elizabeth Foley O'Connor comments: "Virginia Woolf's work best encapsulates the powerful hold objects [can] wield over the imagination".<sup>290</sup> Mr Bowley's impressions inscribe the letters with a masculine sense of heroism, perhaps because of the post-war society he finds himself submerged in. Surrounded by women liberated (in part) from their domestication and shell-shocked soldiers (effeminate "shadows" of the masculine heroes sent to war), he seeks the sort of masculine heroism espoused before the war. However, Woolf develops Bowley's impression no further as, in a rejection of both earlier, exclusively male grand narratives and the narrative closure favoured by the Materialists' linear narratives, the impression remains only partially disclosed, interrupted by the return of the everyday: the sky-writer's engines.

Then suddenly, as a train out of a tunnel, the aeroplane rushed out of the clouds again, the sound boring into the ears of all people in the Mall, in the Green Park, in Piccadilly, in Regent Street, in Regent's Park, and the bar of smoke curved behind and it dropped down, and it soared up and wrote one letter after another – but what word was it writing?<sup>291</sup>

The aural presence of the sky-writer produces a series of invisible strands linking all those who are spatially divided across London. The material objects, O'Connor suggests, can "serve as transitions through which the narrator passes from one mind to another by means of a common object of contemplation".<sup>292</sup> Through their contemplation of the sky-writer the crowd of strangers are united as their individual voices merge into a narration which passes fluidly from one to the



other. Woolf employs the material to subvert the Materialists' use of objects to define characters and demonstrate authority, as the material is subordinate to the fleeting impressions it inspires; the authorial narration is subjugated as the impressions dominate and the authorial narrator's voice is silenced by the characters' focalisation. Thus, it is the act of contemplating the sky-writer that links Mr Bowley standing in the vicinity of Buckingham Palace, and whose impressions led into this paragraph, to Lucrezia Warren-Smith in Regent's Park who is trying to get her shell-shocked husband Septimus, to whom the narrative shifts, to look up at the sky. Woolf allows the sky-writer, the impressions of its movements, its smoke trail, and the noise of its engines, to weave a web of impressions with which to narrate this ordinary day in London. In contrast to Bennett whose authorial voice dominates the narrative and the narration, Woolf's extradiegetic voice refuses to suppress the thoughts and discourse of the characters with an omniscient authorial voice (which, in this instance, is minimal and in parentheses), choosing instead to present the highly subjective, Impressionist voices of the novel's multiple intradiegetic focalisers.

I opened this chapter with an overview of Woolf and the modernist movement, noting how she holds an antinomic position of being neither wholly within nor wholly without. Whilst it is necessary to acknowledge how feminist literary critics have helped distance Woolf from a form-driven, often *male*, theorisation of modernism, it has been important to establish Woolf's own style in order to consider how it functions in adaptation. Woolf's writing on fiction, as well as her fiction writing, demonstrated stylistic similarities with literary Impressionism, and I shall expand on my discussion of this in the next chapter. Notably, I have demonstrated how Woolf herself strategically employed stylistic imitation to illustrate her criticism of her literary predecessors, the Materialists. One critical point of analysis to be explored in the following chapter will be how Woolf presents the impressions of the hysteric, Septimus Warren-Smith, a figure previously silent and silenced in (and by) society and literature. Woolf not only sought to revise "how" to write modern fiction but she also sought to revise who, and what, was represented. This will develop elements of my reading of the short story "An Unwritten Novel" above and return the study to a consideration of cultural contexts and alternate intertexts such as the figure of the hysteric.



# Chapter Three

## A Day in the Life of *Mrs Dalloway*: Impressions and Hysterical Lesbianism

In this chapter I will consider the rhetoric employed by Woolf, drawing upon her impressionistic style as outlined in the previous chapter, as this will form the foundation for my discussion of stylistic imitation in the fourth and fifth chapters where I explore the film and literary adaptations of *Mrs Dalloway*. This chapter will examine in detail the two central characters of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, focusing upon such key scenes as Clarissa's party and Septimus's suicide, as well as the moments in which the two characters' lives become intertwined, most notably through their separate relationships with the doctor Sir William Bradshaw. In addition, I will also introduce two key intertextual strands that prove integral to this study: the figure of the hysteric and Woolf-related academic criticism. The latter is a key element of my discussion of Cunningham's *The Hours*, featuring in my analyses of both the Mrs Woolf and the Mrs Dalloway strands of the narrative. Whilst the intertextual role of academic criticism in adaptation has previously been addressed within adaptation theory, this study addresses the inclusion of less normative intertexts such as the figure of the hysteric, a cultural construction employed by phallocentrism to advocate the suppression of the feminine. The exploration of the less-tangential, non-normative intertext is returned to in chapter five when I explore the intertextual influence of Virginia Woolf's multi-faceted cultural iconicity in relation to *The Hours*. The figure of the hysteric operates intertextually within *Mrs Dalloway* and, as I shall demonstrate shortly with a detailed consideration of Septimus's hysteria, has a critical role in terms of the novel's own feminist politics. It is for this reason that I shall open this chapter with a discussion of hysteria and the figure of the hysteric before turning to the novel itself.



## Septimus Smith: a Not-So Ordinary Mind on a Not-So Ordinary Day

Woolf conceived of a modern(ist) fiction which sought to represent human nature and she envisioned doing so by capturing the myriad impressions that fell upon the ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The sky-writer scene in *Mrs Dalloway* I examined in the previous chapter, then, achieves this as impressions of the “ordinary”, a smoke scrawled advertisement for Toffee, usurps (what could be) the extraordinary, the in-passing presence of the Queen (or the Prince of Wales or the Prime-Minister). But, Woolf’s representation of the ordinary is, frankly, far from ordinary; it is, as she stated in “Modern Fiction”: “trivial, fantastic, evanescent ... an incessant shower of innumerable atoms”.<sup>293</sup> Woolf further pushes the boundaries of modern fiction by employing an impression-driven narration to explore an often overlooked and silenced figure, that of the hysteric, presenting the reader with a character whose mind is, quite conceivably, less (or more) than the ordinary mind: Septimus Warren-Smith.

Septimus, as Woolf’s poet, her visionary, is set apart from others, and just as his “fantastic Christian name” distinguishes him from other Smiths his shell shock, or male hysteria, similarly sets him apart from the everyman.<sup>294</sup> Septimus’s perceptions of the world he inhabits, such as his responses to a car back-firing and the sky-writer, differ vastly from others: Mr Bowley’s impressions of the sky-writer present an association with a prior style of storytelling whereas Septimus’s impressions, which transport him back to the horrors of trench warfare, are not of masculine adventurers, thus echoing Woolf’s argument of myriad impressions falling with an accent that “falls differently from old”. Septimus is a character whose nature clearly cannot be like that of old, and whilst he pines for his “old” life in “an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays and Miss Isabel Pole”, he can never return to it.<sup>295</sup> Before the war a “shy and stammering” and lovelorn Septimus retreated into an England long since passed, “devouring” the texts of Shakespeare and Darwin, and becoming infatuated with his Shakespeare tutor Miss Pole; after the war he similarly lives in the past, but it is not a romantic, Shakespearean England to which he retreats, rather it is his memories of the war and what he lost because of it.<sup>296</sup> Septimus’s was a mind subsumed by the old, infatuated by the land of Shakespeare (he volunteered in order to save this England) but the war irrevocably detaches him both from this England of old and the England to which he returns: he is dislocated from the present by the recent past,



the loss of Evans compounded by his inability to save an England which was already lost to him, and these losses influence his impressions of the present.

Septimus's dislocated experience of the world is reflected by the impressions it generates. For instance, a car back-firing does not simply startle Septimus momentarily, as it does Clarissa; it leaves him paralysed, "rooted to the pavement" as the "world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames".<sup>297</sup> The aural stimulus in his present projects Septimus's mind back to the past as the horrors of trench warfare "come almost to the surface".<sup>298</sup> Septimus's response to the sky-writer is equally distinct:

So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him, in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness, one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks.<sup>299</sup>

Septimus's response is, arguably, a celebration of the impression itself as there is little within the paragraph to describe the object being gazed upon. The paragraph privileges Septimus's impressions of the scene, the "exquisite beauty", "inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness" and the emotional products of such impressions. The actual scene is, quite literally, absent as the smokey graphemes, incomprehensible to Septimus, are excluded. The rhetoric of Septimus's impressions echoes the transformative quality of Mr Bowley's heroic clouds, both generating the perception of something more than the ordinary and, equally important, something lost: one impresses a sense of heroic adventure, whilst the other invests the scene with a bewitching beauty equated with his nostalgic view of a pastoral England and Shakespeare. The passage is a sort of wondrous illustration of Woolf's manifesto for a modern fiction as the ordinary, something as *trivial* as a Toffee advertisement, morphs into the *fantastic* which, in turn, inspires a response usually reserved for grand life-changing events, such as the birth of a child. Through the impressions of Septimus, Woolf has cemented her rejection of a Materialist approach to fiction; she has revelled in the everyday; transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary; and highlighted their negation of character in fiction by privileging the characters' impressions and emotional experience of the world. It is, as I shall return to later, significant that it is the impressions of Septimus, notably



feminine with their theme of beauty, and not the masculine heroism of Mr Bowley's, that reinforce the distance between Woolf and the Materialists.

Septimus, in his dislocated state, finds new relationships and new meaning in the world, which are communicated by sparrows singing "in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death".<sup>300</sup> Septimus's sparrows communicate words of comfort "(He noted such revelations on the backs of envelopes)", consoling Septimus's loss by denying it: if there is no death, then Evans cannot be lost for he cannot be dead. And so, with no death, Septimus suddenly sees Evans in Regent's Park: "There was his hand; there the dead. [...] But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings!"<sup>301</sup> Septimus's hallucination, like Mr Bowley's cloud's adventure, is interrupted, in this instance with Woolf's multiple focalisation: first, the focalisation shifts to Rezia who implores him to 'Look', in a bid to prevent him from "talk[ing] aloud to himself out of doors";<sup>302</sup> second, to Maisie Johnson who asks the Warren Smiths, who "Both seemed queer", for directions;<sup>303</sup> before moving to Mrs Dempster and then Mr Bentley observing the sky-writer "writing a T, and O, an F";<sup>304</sup> which returns us to Mr Bowley's earlier, murmured exclamation, "It says Toffee".<sup>305</sup> The myriad impressions, as I noted in chapter two, intertwine and narrative conventions (spatial and temporal) are disrupted as instantaneous impressions separated by space (both pages and diegetic locations divide them) are (re)united by the web of impressions. This style of leaping from impression to impression will be considered in chapter four where I discuss the sky-writer scene in Marleen Gorris' film adaptation of *Mrs Dalloway*.

Evans' apparition reappears to Septimus again in Regent's Park; this second apparition reinforces the notion that the sparrows' message of there being no death offers Septimus consolation:

'For God's sake don't come!' Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead.

But the branches parted. A man in grey was walking towards them. It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed.<sup>306</sup>

In morphing the stranger into Evans (the man in grey is in fact Peter Walsh returning from Clarissa's house) Septimus is again able to deny his death: in the delusional resurrection Evans appears without a trace of the war upon him, both the mud and the wounds which would be indicative of trench warfare are absent, thus



augmenting Septimus's delusional denial. The sparrows' revelation that "There is no death" denies that which took Evans from Septimus, whilst Septimus's second hallucination denies that which led to Evans' death: trench warfare, or even the war itself. Septimus's preoccupation with what is lost, Evans and his pre-war life with Miss Pole and Shakespeare, is particularly interesting as it returns us to Septimus's hysteria and to Freud who posited loss as being one of "the conditioning factors in melancholia".<sup>307</sup> In order to consider Septimus's character in detail it is necessary to examine Freud's theory of melancholia to understand the nature of Septimus's hysteria.

In "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) Freud explored an individual's responses to the loss of a love-object, positing that those suffering from "a morbid pathological disposition" will develop melancholia:

a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment.<sup>308</sup>

Septimus exhibits many of these symptoms: he expresses a desire to commit suicide; in spite of Rezia's attempts to get him to look Septimus is not interested in the sky-writer's smokey message, and the world around him, rather he is entirely isolated "quite alone, condemned, deserted"<sup>309</sup>; he not only loses the capacity to love (he is relieved when Rezia stops wearing her wedding ring: "The rope was cut; ... he was free"<sup>310</sup>); he is devoid of feeling altogether – upon Evans' death he "congratulated himself upon feeling very little" – promotion; the end of the war and his engagement to Rezia are all met "with indifference";<sup>311</sup> Dr Holmes exclaims of his inactivity "'So you're in a funk' ... Wouldn't it be better to do something instead of lying in bed?";<sup>312</sup> but, for Septimus "nothing mattered" and, as such, he was "condemned to death" – about as extreme a punishment as one could expect.<sup>313</sup> For Freud the loss is regularly that of a loved one, but loss may also be experienced in relation to "some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal" — Septimus's experience of loss is both that of a loved one and of an idealised fatherland (Shakespeare's England).<sup>314</sup>

Interestingly, Freud draws a comparison between the melancholic and the hysteric, arguing that both the melancholic and the hysteric demonstrate tenden-



cies to identify themselves with the love-object – the melancholic identifies themselves with the lost love-object and the hysteric with the father's love-object — in the famous case of Dora the hysteric, Freud argues, she identifies with her father's extra-marital lover.<sup>315</sup> Septimus, as melancholic, is governed by his loss, however Septimus is equally identifiable as an hysteric: he is a victim of shell-shock and as such is situated outside society, beyond phallogentrism. It is to the figure of the hysteric that I now turn.

## Hysteria

### The Figure of the Hysteric and the Suppression of the Feminine Through Cultural Iconicity

Hysteria is an illness long associated with the feminine, as Elaine Showalter explains in *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (1997): “Throughout most of its medical history, hysteria has been associated with women. Its name comes from *hystera*, the Greek word for uterus”.<sup>316</sup> The organ was believed to wander around the body “producing a myriad of symptoms in its wake ... coughs and loss of voice; pain in various parts of the body; tics and twitches; paralyzes, deafness, blindness; fits of crying; fainting; convulsive seizures; and sexual longings”.<sup>317</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, writing in 1982, traces the first use of the word hysteria to Hippocrates and comments: “[Hysteria] was the symptom, to put it crudely, *of being a woman*. And everyone still knows it”.<sup>318</sup> By the nineteenth-century the causes of hysteria were no longer determined to be the result of a wandering womb, but a condition afflicting the nervous system, however the illness remained a female malady, something Showalter's seminal text acknowledges in its title: *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830 — 1980* (1987). Hysteria still retained its connection to the uterus as it was often understood to be the result of female sexual dissatisfaction, with various sexual stimulants being prescribed to combat its symptoms.<sup>319</sup> The tics and twitches, the limb pain and paralyzes, and the sexual longings associated with the hysteric are familiar to us today as the work of physicians and psychiatrists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were absorbed into a broader cultural consciousness, as Showalter's *The Female Malady* addresses in detail. One major



contribution to such universal generalisations (misconceptions) of hysteria was the late nineteenth century work of J-M Charcot, as Huberman explains:

The 'image' of hysteria in the nineteenth century — and certainly something of it remains today — the vulgarized image of hysteria was the one produced and proposed by Charcot.<sup>320</sup>

I shall examine the work of Charcot followed by the highly influential work of one of his students, Sigmund Freud, in order to consider how the figure of the hysteric has influenced the socio-political construction of woman, specifically encouraging the repression of women and female sexuality. I will then explore Woolf's representation of Septimus's hysteria and consider its thematic importance. In chapter four I will focus upon how Gorris adapts this to film through stylistic imitation, highlighting a new means of analysing an adaptation's relationship with its source. Finally, in my final chapter I will address the impact of hysteria upon the construction of Woolf's cultural iconicity and how her hysteria has been contradictorily represented by two of her leading biographers, which in turn generates complexities when considering *The Hours* and its fictional representation of Woolf.

### **J-M Charcot and the Hysterical Tableaux**

J-M Charcot started work in the Salpêtrière hospital, Paris, in 1863 and during the thirty years he worked there treated and documented hysteria (amongst other neurological illnesses), specifically the malady's somatic symptoms.<sup>321</sup> Charcot is noted by Showalter as "the first of the great European theorists of hysteria",<sup>322</sup> by Roy Porter as "the great French neurologist", "that Napoleon of hysteria",<sup>323</sup> and Freud (who incidentally named one of his sons after Charcot) described him as "one of the greatest of physicians and a man whose common sense borders on genius".<sup>324</sup> Charcot promoted the use of hypnosis in the diagnosis of hysteria, and observed that "*a propos* of hysteria, 'c'est toujours la chose génitale'"<sup>325</sup> which, as Porter notes, reflects the centuries-old association of hysteria with female sexuality and female "sexual longings" and influenced Freud's later positing of the sexual aetiology of hysteria.<sup>326</sup> Charcot never limited his work exclusively to female hysterics; he also examined male hysteria, declaring "hysteria in the male is not as rare as is thought".<sup>327</sup> In the latter part of his career at the



Salpêtrière, from 1878 until his death in 1893, Charcot broke away completely from conventionally gendered studies of hysteria to exclusively focus his attentions on the previously denied male hysteric:

There is no denying that, in public perception, grande hystérie was associated with women. However ... Charcot expanded the discussion to include the examination of men as victims of the disease. ... [Motivated] by a broader ideological commitment to tearing aside all superstitions and misconceptions of the disease ... Charcot [examined] the role of trauma and shock in producing hysterical symptoms among men in the workplace.<sup>328</sup>

Charcot's ground-breaking work on male hysteria, interestingly, was not drawn upon when, twenty years after his death, countless men returned from the trenches of the First World War exhibiting hysterical symptoms. Rather, it is Charcot's study and documentation of the female hysterics that has prevailed following the successful publication of *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1876-80), a three volume photographic study of the many somatic symptoms of neurological diseases, including hysteria. Notably the work "does not offer a single portrait of a man" and it is its exclusive representation of the female hysteric which contributed to the continuing cultural figuration of the female hysteric.<sup>329</sup> Just as Charcot's work on the male hysteric has been suppressed, so was the image of the male hysteric as shell-shock victims and male hysteria were removed from the public eye, hidden away in institutions and denied, as I shall return to in my examination of Septimus's encounters with the doctors Holmes and Bradshaw.

Charcot began working on hysteria in 1872 determined to "ground the affliction in the nervous system and to identify physical signs which could not be simulated".<sup>330</sup> He noted that the somatic symptoms of the hysteric were not produced consciously, but unconsciously. In 1876 he developed his theory of *grande hystérie*, an exclusively female ailment otherwise known as hystero-epilepsy which, briefly, consisted of a prolonged, multi-phased seizure in which the hysteric initially exhibits signs of a convulsion and culminates with the hysteric unconsciously mimicking and/or recollecting aloud (usually sexual) events from her past.<sup>331</sup> Charcot turned to photography to document the multitudinous somatic symptoms of neurological diseases and, having built a photographic studio within the hospital, he employed two resident photographers to photograph selected



patients.<sup>332</sup> These photographs were then published alongside Charcot's case notes in *Iconographie* and have become an integral element of the iconography associated with the figure of the hysteric. It is to this visual documentation that I now turn, focussing on what Luce Irigaray in her feminist critique of the manipulation of the feminine, posited as the "hysterical tableaux".

### ***Iconographie and the Hysterical Tableaux***

The *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* featured numerous photographs of the various stages of *grande hystérie* amongst which were images of the somatic contortions produced during the third phase, *attitudes passionnelles*, accompanied by titles such as "amorous supplication", "ecstasy", "eroticism" and "crucifixion".<sup>333</sup> Charcot never once questioned whether these hysterical displays were the product of suggestion (Roy Porter describes Charcot's contemporaries as "not so gullible" as Charcot<sup>334</sup>), despite, for instance, the fact that the limitations of photographic technology meant his hysterical subjects had to remain still for a few minutes whilst the photograph was taken; however, many have since.

In her introduction to Charcot's *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System* Ruth Harris comments on "the flamboyance of the hysterical subjects" suggesting that their compliance may have been a response to "the extraordinary difficulty of winning the attention of the hard-pressed physicians".<sup>335</sup> She continues: "In a sense ... the institutional structure of the Salpêtrière played an important part in generating the symptoms that Charcot then built into his general theory of illness".<sup>336</sup> Didi-Huberman, who describes Charcot as having an "iconographic impulse" and the Salpêtrière as "the great image factory", notes the "extraordinary complicity between patients and doctors" and reinforces Harris' sentiments in his synopsis of the Salpêtrière during Charcot's reign: "a kind of feminine inferno, a *citta dolorosa* confining four thousand incurable or mad women. It was a nightmare in the midst of Paris' *Belle Epoque*".<sup>337</sup>

*Speculum of the Other Woman*, Luce Irigaray's examination and deconstruction of psychoanalysis' oppression of the feminine, plays upon the idea of an hysteria generated by the institutional doctor-patient relationship in her discussion of patriarchal appropriation of hysteria under the heading *Mimesis Imposed*.<sup>338</sup> Irigaray seizes upon hysteria as a production, a staging of femininity constructed in order to validate the privileging of the masculine and the subordination of the



feminine. The “tableaux, the scenes, the dramas, the pantomimes produced by the hysteric” are presented as “a *bad (copy of a) work of art ... a counterfeit ... a forgery*” and, thus, the feminine is exclusively represented (for the hysteric is the only form of femininity afforded representation) as “[a]rtifice, lie, deception”.<sup>339</sup> Irigaray’s theories of hysteria as a “mimesis imposed” allow us to conceive of the hysteric as a patriarchal construction and, thus, as a cultural icon or text through which patriarchy sought to undermine and suppress the feminine. This is critical to this study as I will return to the figure of the hysteric when considering how Woolf’s hysteria was employed to construct one facet of the Woolf cultural icon, in chapter five. In order to illustrate Irigaray’s notion of hysteria as mimesis imposed and a tableau I will turn now to Charcot’s favourite hysteric, Augustine, who illustrates what happens when the hysteric both accepts and refuses to comply with the collaboration imposed upon her.

**Augustine, Charcot’s *very regular, very classical example*:  
“the star model for a whole concept of hysteria”<sup>340</sup>**

Augustine entered the Salpêtrière in 1875 at the age of “fifteen and a half” with “paralysis of sensation in the right arm and attacks of severe hysteria, preceded by pains in the lower right abdomen”.<sup>341</sup> She remained in the hospital for five years, during which time she earned a privileged position working as a nurse’s assistant, a role which provided her with relative freedom within the institution, and she was introduced to the audiences of Charcot’s lectures as follows: “Here, gentlemen, is Augustine, your favourite case”.<sup>342</sup> The privileged status was a benefit of her complicity: her regular reproduction of hysterical symptoms, not just her own but those exhibited by other patients (for Augustine was photographed with a number of somatic symptoms that were not documented during her admission to the hospital).<sup>343</sup> Augustine features in a number of Charcot’s photographs of *grande hystérie* as well as being called upon to illustrate his theory of *grande hystérie* at the culmination of his lectures. Charcot is clearly rewarding mimesis: in exchange for an improved situation Augustine produced a tableau of hysterical symptoms in keeping with Charcot’s own definition of hysteria. In order to reaffirm Irigaray’s suggestion of hysteria as a mimesis imposed it is pertinent to explore what occurs once the hysteric refuses to comply, as it is this moment which ex-



poses the mimesis as imposed and it is at this moment that Augustine disappears from representation.

**“The disaster of a contract reveals the contract and its nature.”<sup>344</sup>**

In 1880, Augustine became dissatisfied with her life in the hospital and she retreated into bouts of uncontrollable hysterical mania, similar to (although arguably more severe than) those with which she was originally admitted.

Augustine’s refusal to imitate those symptoms demanded of her at the desired time soon resulted in her privileges being withdrawn.<sup>345</sup> These fits of mania led to her being repeatedly anaesthetised and confined in isolation; she was no longer photographed and is increasingly absented from Charcot’s written documentation, so little is known of her during this period of her institutionalisation. The moment Augustine is truly hysterical she is extricated from Charcot’s narrative of hysteria and, after her eventual escape from the hospital (whilst disguised as a man), there is nothing known of her. This brief synopsis of Augustine’s *hystory* (as Showalter would have it) signifies how the ‘classical’ hysteric was very much a result of a collaborative process between physician and patient; having refused the mimesis imposed Augustine’s *hystory*, the/her story of her own hysteria is never written, and Augustine the hysteric is excised from Charcot’s hysterical tableaux, and from history.

Charcot’s, or (preferably) Augustine’s, legacy to the construction of the cultural iconicity of the figure of the hysteric is the volumes of detailed case histories and photographs published, such as the aforementioned *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*: as Didi-Huberman notes, what “remains with us is the series of images ... [the] poses, attacks, cries, ‘attitudes passionnelles,’ ‘crucifixions,’ ‘ecstasy,’ and all the postures of delirium”.<sup>346</sup> Significantly, Augustine’s and Charcot’s photographic tableaux have become synonymous with the figure of the hysteric and return us to Irigaray’s description of hysteria as a (bad copy of a) work of art. The hysterical tableau is a controlled representation of hysteria and when the hysteric becomes uncontrollable she is no longer afforded a place within the tableaux. For Irigaray the hysterical tableau is not about hysteria as a performance (it is not Augustine’s tableaux) but how hysteria is a construction, a product of, in this instance, Charcot’s staging — once Augustine rejects Charcot’s staging her hysteria is no longer represented. This foregrounding of hysteria as something to



be represented, as an aesthetic object, is echoed by Showalter who comments: "the representation of female hysteria was a central aspect of Charcot's work. His hysterical women patients were surrounded by images of female hysteria".<sup>347</sup>

This notion of the hysterical tableau as a tool constructed and employed by patriarchy to suppress uncontrollable, and therefore undesirable, forms of femininity is also explored by Rosie Betterton in *An Intimate Distance* (1996). Betterton compares the representation of suffragettes in the national press with the various photographic images of Augustine and her *grande hystérie*. Betterton presents a story taken from the 5 May 1914 edition of *The Daily Mirror* discussing the Suffragettes demonstrating at Derby Day and compares its photographic tableaux of various militant suffragettes with those of Augustine. The newspaper's photographic tableaux employed sub-titles to label the various images of the suffragettes in a similar manner to those used by Charcot; one photograph titled "Ecstasy on arrest" mirrors the title of "Ecstasy" accompanying one of the photographs of Augustine. Critically, the photographs stylistically imitate the photographs Charcot published of Augustine: the woman arrested has her mouth open in a similar, somewhat orgasmic expression to Augustine. Didi-Huberman observes how Charcot's "tableau was classic" not simply in terms of a classical representation but because "it was accepted as authoritative"; "the great image factory ... became truly canonical" as Charcot's images were imitated by others working in early psychiatric medicine.<sup>348</sup> *The Daily Mirror's* own typographical, stylistic imitation demonstrates the degree to which Charcot's tableaux had become canonical, their influence moving beyond the spheres of psychiatry to a much more general and public cultural consciousness. The suffragettes in this campaign are being aligned with the figure of the hysteric as a means of undermining their political campaign. They threatened to destroy patriarchy's cultural, social and political oppression of women and, thus, expose the fallacy that is the privileged status afforded the male based upon biological difference. The newspaper's stylistic imitation is a pastiche of Charcot's photographs specifically designed to deride the suffrage movement. In turn, the newspaper is mirroring the position of the physician with its, as illustrated by Didi-Huberman's ironic view of Charcot's *grande hystérie's* final phase, *delirium*: "so-called terminal delirium, the painful phase during which hysterics 'start talking,' during which one tries to stop the attack, by every possible means".<sup>349</sup> In representing the suffragettes as hysterical the media is demanding



that they, like their “mad”, unruly, deviant, and undesirable counterparts, be locked away and silenced, by every possible means. In chapter five I will consider how Woolf’s bouts of hysteria have influenced her biographers and, subsequently, her presence within the cultural consciousness such as her varying cultural iconicity. In addition, I will consider how Woolf’s madness, her hysteria, featured heavily in the critical reception of Daldry’s film adaptation of *The Hours*, and how its domination often resulted in the remainder of the film being overlooked.

### **Silencing the hysteric: Freud and Psychoanalysis**

Feminism’s engagement with the figure of the hysteric, as Irigaray’s study *Speculum of the Other Woman* foregrounds, has been predominantly focused on psychoanalysis, and most notably Freud’s Dora, published as “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria” in 1901 and revised by Freud in 1905. The case of Dora has assisted feminists in their exposure and deconstruction of the fallacies of a patriarchal social order which demands the privileging of the masculine and the suppression of the feminine. In order to explore the significance of Septimus Warren Smith and his male hysteria in *Mrs Dalloway* and its adaptations it is necessary to discuss the socio-political system psychoanalysis theorised and how the hysteric exposes and explodes its construction.

What is commonly referred to as patriarchy has another, altogether more specific, name used by feminist psychoanalysts, and this is phallocentrism. Phallocentrism refers to the realm of representation as governed by patriarchal dictates which draws upon feminism and a deconstructionist understanding of language. A main component of defining phallocentrism is Lacan’s theory of the Phallus as central to language, or signification, a theory which posits that as woman is in possession of “no-thing”; she cannot be signified; she is, therefore, nothing. Whilst seemingly equating to patriarchy, phallocentrism, as a term, is preferential; it specifies the centrality of the phallus to the socio-political which influences culture and representation. For this reason, I shall employ the term phallocentrism, as opposed to patriarchy, throughout the remainder of this study.

Lacanian theory determines that there are three contrasting yet interlinking orders that contribute to the construction of the subject, or the self: the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. It is the Symbolic which is of most interest as this is the realm concerned with representation and language. The Symbolic is the realm



of the signifier and the signified of which the Phallus is the fundamental signifier — it is the ultimate referent against which all things are defined. In opposition to the Phallus is the Other (*objet A*) which cannot be signified, it is lack, and as such is situated *beyond* the Symbolic. The Symbolic, therefore, is constructed in terms of presence and absence, of having and not having. However, the Symbolic is a triadic structure in which the *third term*, the *Nom-du-Père*, intervenes, or divides, preventing any fixed relation between signifier and signified (thus meaning can never be fixed, rather it is ever-changing in a web of multiple referents). The *Nom-du-Père*, otherwise known as the law of the father through the homonymic substitution of name/*nom* with no/*non*, governs the Symbolic, and thus the subject's place within representation. The Symbolic, then, is a phallogentric order: the centrality of the Phallus as fundamental signifier positions woman as *not*, and, therefore, woman is equated with the *Other*, she is lack, she is unrepresentable, she is outside (or *beyond*) the Symbolic and the law of the father. Feminist criticism of Lacanian theory has questioned its negation of woman through its biological determination,<sup>350</sup> but some feminists have chosen to develop this “negation” and consider the potential of situating woman as being *beyond* the Symbolic, as something *more than*. Jacqueline Rose in her introduction to *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne* determines that woman is “the ‘something more’, ... [that] escapes or is left over from the phallic function, and exceeds it. Woman is, therefore, placed *beyond* (beyond the phallus).<sup>351</sup> Irigaray, similarly, has celebrated the feminine as excess, something *more than* the lack phallogentrism inscribes it with. In doing so feminism is able to conceive of woman as something *more than* the figure of passivity and lack that phallogentrism affords woman, she becomes something other than that which phallogentrism would have us believe.

The hysteric is a key figure to feminism's critique of phallogentrism because she quite clearly occupies a position *beyond* the Symbolic: as Augustine's case history illustrates, upon refusing the law of the father she is refused access to representation. The hysteric's somatic language, which Freud names “somatic compliance”,<sup>352</sup> situates the hysteric *beyond* the Symbolic and phallogentrism, and Freud explicitly links the somatic symptom to that which cannot be spoken: “hysterical symptoms are the expression of [the hysteric's] most secret and repressed wishes”.<sup>353</sup> Charles Berheimer, in his introduction to the seminal collection *In*



*Dora's Case: Freud—Hysteria—Feminism*, explains how psychoanalysis determined to establish “its scientific authority and mastery over hysteria as the illness of the other, typically the feminine other”.<sup>354</sup> A number of the collection’s contributors pick up on the notion of Freud as master appropriating the hysterical Dora: Steven Marcus argues that “as the case history advances it becomes increasingly clear that Freud and not Dora has become the central character in the action. ... Instead of letting Dora appropriate her own story, Freud became the appropriator of it.”<sup>355</sup> The titles of Maria Ramas’ and Toril Moi’s essays, “Freud’s Dora, Dora’s Hysteria” and “Representation of Patriarchy: Sexuality and Epistemology in Freud’s Dora” respectively, similarly point to “Dora” being an appropriation of Freud, and therefore phallocentrism. Jacqueline Rose’s title, “Dora: Fragment of an Analysis”, infers the partial, but never complete, access to Dora’s hysteria. In her contribution Rose describes the ‘Dora’ case as “a series of contradictions” and says “Freud’s interpretation of the case is based on a simple identification of the oedipal triangle”; in other words, Freud, like Charcot, *stages* Dora’s hysteria to illustrate his own theories.<sup>356</sup> The case of Dora has encouraged feminism’s multiple criticisms of phallocentrism’s mastery over hysteria, which, briefly, they see as epitomising the socio-political oppression of the feminine by phallocentrism.

The hysteric, as Irigaray suggests in *Speculum*, is a figure who must be curbed and brought back in line with phallocentrism and through psychoanalysis Freud was one such master to do so. Irigaray continues: “We can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the ‘masculine’”; it is clear that woman and her “madness” are continually *appropriated, mastered, curbed, humiliated*, and silenced in order that the masculine can uphold the Phallus and repress the Other.<sup>357</sup> For Irigaray the hysteric and her somatic discourse, must be translated back into language under the law of the father for without such *interpretation* she cannot be understood. It is through this masterful staging that the hysteric, and therefore the feminine, is afforded access to representation, but it is at a cost as such a representation is entirely staged by phallocentrism. So, as Shoshana Felman suggests, the “challenge” is not simply to speak against phallocentrism, but “to establish a discourse ... which would no longer be defined by the phallacy of masculine meaning”.<sup>358</sup> Augustine and Dora are each *appropriated* to maintain the dichotomy of male/female, reason/madness, speech/silence



(and each reject it by absenting themselves from such appropriation) but what happens when the phallacy is not simply disrupted by the hysterical rejection, but when the foundational dichotomy, the biological determinism, is disrupted?

What happens when the hysteric is male?

### **Shell-shocked: Male hysteria and phallocentrism**

Lisa L. Diedrich notes how the phrase male hysteria is, by its etymology, oxymoronic in nature and how, despite the uptake of the phrase within contemporary psychiatry, “the term that became common parlance, possibly because it avoided implicit feminine associations, was ‘shell-shock’”.<sup>359</sup> In her essay “Hysterical Men: Shell-shock and the Destabilisation of Masculinity” Diedrich highlights how World War One engendered warfare as feminine: “Trench warfare was defensive, not offensive, in character”.<sup>360</sup> It was a war of waiting and, “Thus, the ‘offensive personality’ associated with the soldier in particular and the masculine in general was replaced by the ‘defensive personality’ associated with the feminine”.<sup>361</sup> The soldier, and not just the victim of shell-shock, was already forced into a position that was not his socially constructed normative. Deidrich continues by stating that “hysteria was a means of opting out of an intolerable, though socially sanctioned, situation”; hysterical women were responding to their socially sanctioned passivity, or domestic imprisonment, and the shell-shocked soldier, the hysterical man, was responding to the intolerable situation of, simply, passively waiting to die.<sup>362</sup> Whilst the similarity in symptoms between female hysterics and sufferers of shell-shock were recognised by the psychiatric and medical establishment, as well as by society in general, that which was refuted was the similarity in their cause: the socially sanctioned, intolerable lifestyle. I would add to Diedrich’s comments by suggesting that such a recognition was unattainable: Breuer, with his famous hysteric Anna O. and Charcot with Augustine, both noted the hysteric’s high intelligence, but both failed to question the implications of inhabiting a society which refused and refuted intellectual, financial (or any form of) independence. If society was unable (or unwilling) to acknowledge the socio-political causes of female hysteria it was far from ready to consider the questions male hysteria raised.<sup>363</sup>



One critical issue Diedrich raises, and one this study will remain conscious of, draws upon the conception of hysteria as a disease which mimics the symptoms of other, wholly physiological conditions (and therefore not psychological) such as epilepsy.

If the female hysteric is said to mimic or perform a disease, then does the male hysteric, in a sense, mimic and perform not only a disease but femininity as well?<sup>364</sup>

If hysteria is the undesirable form of femininity, then, a male hysteric is not just imitating femininity and, thus, disregarding phallogentric norms, but is reproducing an undesirable performance which demands to be silenced and controlled. The oxymoron that is male hysteria disrupts phallogentrism; it not only undermines the gendered binaries of male/female, reason/madness etc, but brings into question the hierarchies that such dichotomies instil. Male hysteria highlights how masculinity is little more than a socio-political construction as the male exhibits explicitly feminine characteristics.<sup>365</sup> The male hysteric, like his female counterparts, must be silenced before he exposes the phallacies of the gender roles assigned by phallogentrism and, like his female predecessors, he is another subject to be mastered.

In *The Female Malady* Showalter highlights how the treatment of the male hysteria was “essentially coercive. The goal of wartime psychiatry was primarily to keep the men fighting”, or, in other words, to return them to their normative roles of masculinity.<sup>366</sup> The physicians saw the shell-shocked soldier as effeminate and their treatment of the condition sought to bring the hysterical male back in line with socially acceptable conventions. Much like their female predecessors, the hysterical men were seen as transgressing their gender norms and their treatment sought to rectify this; the illness, its diagnosis and its cure were invariably influenced by “social expectations of the masculine role in war” and in society in general.<sup>367</sup> The treatment, Showalter notes, fulfilled “dual needs of therapy and punishment”.<sup>368</sup> Male hysteria was not simply an illness but a violation of socio-cultural norms, it needed controlling, silencing, and, above it all, it needed to be deterred. The conclusion of the war did not silence this male transgression of phallogentrism’s gender norms, as Showalter notes: “Psychiatrists did not anticipate, however, that men’s war neurosis would be much worse *after* the war.”<sup>369</sup> The war neurosis was not a neurosis of war after all but a rebellion, a protest, in



which the inexpressible — a rejection of socio-cultural norms of masculinity — finds expression through a somatic discourse: “If the essence of manliness was not to complain, then shell shock was the body language of masculine complaint, a disguised male protest not only against the war but against the concept of ‘manliness’ itself.”<sup>370</sup> Male hysteria is closer to its female equivalent than phallocentrism would like.

Showalter’s study of hysteria and literature foregrounds how:

Immediately after the war ... women novelists appropriated the theme of shell shock, and fixed it in the public mind. They also made explicit connections between psychiatric therapies and the imposition of patriarchal values insensitive to passion, fantasy, and creativity.<sup>371</sup>

She continues by acknowledging the critical role of one female writer in particular:

It remained to Virginia Woolf, however, to connect the shell-shocked veteran with the repressed woman of the man-governed world through their common enemy, the nerve specialist. ... More than any other novelist of the period, Woolf perceived and exposed the sadism of nerve therapies that enforced conventional sex roles.<sup>372</sup>

And she does so, most readily, through Septimus Warren Smith and Clarissa Dalloway, as I shall demonstrate in this chapter.

## **Septimus Smith: the Hysteric, the Poet, the Visionary**

### **Septimus’s Hysteria and the “Common Enemy”**

In “The Prime Minister”, a short story Woolf drafted in 1922 (the year widely noted as marking the birth of High Literary Modernism) that was later adapted and incorporated into the *Mrs Dalloway* novel, Septimus Smith’s hysteria is expressed in a similar manner to its expression in the novel. He sees the world in a different way than before the war, he finds “innumerable meanings everywhere”, and feels at odds with the world he inhabits.<sup>373</sup> Septimus’s dislocation is expressed (through free indirect discourse) as follows:



People were looking at him. What did one say when people spoke to one? he could not behave properly anymore [,] he had got outside society. He would kill himself. He would give his body to the starving Austrians. First he would kill the Prime Minister and J. Ellis Robertson. My name will be on placards, he thought. He could do anything, for he was now beyond law.<sup>374</sup>

Showalter notes that “male hysteria in World War I was a protest against the politicians, generals, and psychiatrists”, something Septimus’s murderous desires echoes.<sup>375</sup> Showalter’s comment highlights the similarities between the female hysteric’s and the male hysteric’s position; both are acts of protest against the institutions that seek to control and repress their expression of all things Other. And, it is not simply the physicians who are representative of the *nom du père*; male hysteria highlights how society as a whole is governed by, and thus subject to, phallogentric law. The male hysteric rebels against the politicians and generals who declare war, he refuses to fight (or, arguably, he refuses to wait to fight and die in the process), and he similarly rebels against his physicians, the doctors with whom their female counterparts have been struggling for centuries. Septimus’s sense of being beyond the law similarly reflects feminist readings of the hysteric as being beyond phallogentrism.

In “The Prime Minister” Septimus’s hysterical rebellion is expressed through an act of violence against the phallogentric institution, as he envisions killing the Prime Minister. In the novel Septimus’s relationship with phallogentrism is all the more desperate and tragic as he kills himself in direct response to institutional patriarchy, as personified by the physicians Dr Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw. It is through these two characters, particularly Bradshaw, that Woolf foregrounds the sadism of the so-called nerve specialist desperate to uphold conventional sex roles. Septimus is initially treated by Dr Holmes who first diagnoses that “[t]here was nothing whatever the matter”, and that Septimus simply requires a trip to “the Music Hall” and a couple of “tabloids of bromide dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime”.<sup>376</sup> In a subsequent visit Dr Holmes simply “brushed it all aside — headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams — nerve symptoms and nothing more”, telling Septimus (and Rezia) that “health is largely a matter in our own control” and that Septimus should take an interest in external things, “take up some hobby”.<sup>377</sup> The next visit Septimus refuses to see “the damned fool” to which Holmes responds by accusing him of being “in a funk”.<sup>378</sup> This moment of refusal



is significant as it both presents Septimus's rejection of Holmes' dismissive attitude towards his hysteria as well as depicting how the doctor, Holmes, reduces the hysteric's rejection to that of an ill-tempered child. Septimus's continual refusal of the physician in the passages that follow foreground the hysteric's desperate rebellion against the physician.

Showalter's comments on the treatment of male hysteria as simply coercing them back in line with the socially sanctioned form of masculinity are echoed by Septimus's thoughts: "Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a post-card, human nature is on you. Holmes is on you. Their only chance was to escape [...] anywhere, anywhere, away from Dr. Holmes".<sup>379</sup> Septimus, having "stumbled", must now be brought back in line with the masculine norm, but it is this norm that Septimus rejects and so he is alone, "deserted" by Rezia who "could not understand him".<sup>380</sup> Having rejected the phallocentric norm Septimus is, as an hysteric, *beyond* society and, in contrast to the short story which presents Septimus's being outside of society and beyond law, in the novel Septimus's situation is all the more tragic:

So he was deserted. The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes. But why should he kill himself for their sakes? Food was pleasant; the sun hot; and this killing oneself, how does one set about it, with a table knife, uglily, with floods of blood, — by sucking a gaspipe? He was too weak; he could scarcely raise his hand.<sup>381</sup>

The shift from Septimus wanting to "kill" the institution to the institution (society) demanding he kill himself is critical. In *Mrs Dalloway* Septimus is no longer rebelling against society but is being crushed by its, the strength of the oppression is such that he believes the only thing to satisfy his oppressors is his death. Septimus's suicide would provide society with the opportunity to condemn him: suicide was a recognised and punishable crime up until 1961. Septimus's suicide effectively silences him whilst providing society with the opportunity to decry him and simultaneously applaud itself. Inducing suicide, therefore, both removes the threat and allows the threat to be (mis)represented as criminal, thus providing the opportunity to "stage" his hysteria in a manner that upholds phallocentrism. As the passage continues Septimus questions the idea of suicide, he interrogates their plea for him to kill himself, off-setting the pleasure he continues to find in life with the "ugliness" of suicide. He is "too weak" to raise his hand, but can we assume



this is to hold the gas-pipe to his mouth? Or, is it that he lacks the strength to raise his hand in an act of protest? Either way, the world has exhausted him.

The passage continues as Septimus revels in his position as outsider, further refuting the power of the red-faced brute Holmes and the phallogentric society he personifies:

Besides, now that he was quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die alone are alone, there was a luxury in it, an isolation full of sublimity; a freedom which the attached can never know. Holmes had won of course; the brute with the red nostrils had won. But even Holmes himself could not touch this last relic straying on the edge of the world, this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world.<sup>382</sup>

Whilst Holmes is victorious, Septimus is not wholly defeated; rather, being on the fringes of society provides him with the “luxury” of “an isolation full of sublimity”. Septimus has access to a place beyond society where he is free from their law and, as such, finds what they can never know — he finds something *more than* that which society, with all its gender normatives and conventions and laws, can know: freedom. Hysteria moves Septimus beyond the Symbolic and beyond the “touch” of the law of the father, freeing him from the oppression of a phallogentric society. And it is with this sudden sense of release that for Septimus, and Septimus alone, experiences an epiphany:

It was at that moment (Rezia had gone shopping) that the great revelation took place. A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him.

‘Evans, Evans!’ he cried.

Mr. Smith was talking aloud to himself, Agnes the servant girl cried to Mrs. Filmer in the kitchen. ‘Evans, Evans!’ he had said as she brought in the tray. She had jumped, she did. She scuttled downstairs.<sup>383</sup>

The revelation comes to Septimus with a visit from his dead comrade Evans, whose death firmly situates him beyond the Symbolic. Septimus, whilst inhabiting the phallogentric has, through his madness, access to those who are beyond the Symbolic and it is in his communication with them that he finds answers not available to him in the Symbolic — as epitomised by his relationships with his doctors, who both fail to offer him a similar sense of release or revelation. The reader, who is firmly situated within the Symbolic, does not have the same access as Septimus so his revelation remains undiscovered as the focalisation dramatically shifts to



Mrs Filmer's servant girl, Agnes, who was made to jump by Septimus's sudden cries for Evans.<sup>384</sup> Woolf's writing infers there is *something more than* and yet she chooses to represent the moment of the revelation, but not the revelation itself. This is significant as not only does it return us to Woolf's celebration of the impression but also her determination to capture the undetermined and unfixed nature of life.

And so Septimus is taken to Sir William Bradshaw, a Harley Street "nerve-specialist" who "loved his profession; made a fine figurehead at ceremonies" and had a reputation for "almost infallible accuracy in diagnosis", as well as one "of sympathy; tact; understanding of the human soul"; the latter, we are parenthetically informed as being "of the utmost importance in dealing with nerve cases", and is derived from the combination of his looking weary and having grey hair.<sup>385</sup> William Bradshaw is introduced through third person narration, but the rhetoric is indicative of the man being described; for instance, the details of Bradshaw's empathetic nature are punctuated in a manner reflecting the style of a public-speaker with slightly elongated pauses placing emphasis on each attribute, individually. The third person, subjective narration is maintained to narrate the arrival of the Warren Smiths at Harley Street, and their subsequent meeting with Bradshaw; which follows immediately after, without a paragraph break, from the sentence relating Bradshaw's "understanding" of the human soul.

He could see the first moment they came into the room (the Warren Smiths they were called); he was certain direct he saw the man; it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a complete breakdown—complete physical and nervous breakdown, with every symptom in an advanced stage, he ascertained in two or three minutes (writing answers to questions, murmured discreetly, on a pink card).<sup>386</sup>

The use of free indirect discourse is more striking here as the medical vernacular emerges through the third person narration, as if superimposing itself over the objective narration. Phrases such as "a case of extreme gravity" evoke the direct speech of Bradshaw, drawing readers into the mind of the physician whilst simultaneously distancing them, and the narrator, from him by maintaining a sense of the external — the reader is not invited to share Bradshaw's experience, they are resolutely distanced from him through the third person directives such as "he saw". The rhetoric of the parentheses reinforces such a distance; they are devoid of the rhetoric associated with medical practitioners but, more importantly, they represent the uneasiness of the Warren Smiths who murmur their responses to



Bradshaw's questions – such a detail undermines the image of the sympathetic physician who, in just “two or three minutes”, can claim to understand his patient.

Just as the free indirect discourse associated with Bradshaw is laced with the language of the physician, so are the opinions of Bradshaw coloured by his profession. He diagnoses Septimus based on a few minutes of observation, much like Charcot who focused on the somatic and ignored the histories of his patients – interestingly, just as Bradshaw evaluates Septimus and his illness through his appearance, he also sees his own character reflected in (and measured by) his appearance. It is only after Bradshaw has ascertained Septimus has suffered a complete mental and physical breakdown that the consultation's dialogue appears in the text. The structure of the narration foregrounds Bradshaw's staging of Septimus's hysteria: the physician's rhetoric, his thoughts, his narrative of the scene overwrite the third person narration so that Bradshaw, like Charcot before him, may construct and impose his narrative of the hysteric, not simply speaking for them but, just as he does with the third person narrator, speaking over them, obliterating the voice of the other, silencing the hysteric and their “hystory”. This similarly echoes the tendency of the Materialists to speak over or silence their own characters, as highlighted by Woolf in her caricatural imitation of Bennett discussed in chapter two.

In the passage which follows the conversation between Septimus, Rezia and Bradshaw is presented through a combination of direct (of which there are a few instances) and indirect discourse, the former interrupting the scene with Bradshaw's observations and commentary.

Prescribed a little bromide? Said there was nothing the matter? Ah yes (those general practitioners! thought Sir William. It took half his time to undo their blunders. Some were irreparable).

‘You served with great distinction in the War?’

The patient repeated the word ‘war’ interrogatively.

He was attaching meanings to words of a symbolical kind. A serious symptom to be noted on the card.

‘The War?’ the patient asked. The European War — that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder? Had he served with distinction? He really forgot. In the War itself he had failed.

‘Yes, he served with great distinction.’ Rezia assured the doctor; ‘he was promoted.’<sup>387</sup>

The passage recounts, in a fragmented, disjointed, synoptical manner, Holmes' visits to Septimus — the rhetoric, with its parenthesised aside explicitly belongs to Bradshaw, suggesting that it is Bradshaw's summation that is infiltrating the narra-



tion. The free indirect discourse is punctuated, as if it is extracting the facts of the matter “to be noted on a card”. The Warren Smiths, most notably Septimus, are all but absent from the narration. When Septimus’s feelings are expressed, they are represented in free indirect discourse, as above, however, the instant they are presented directly is interrupted, by Rezia’s direct discourse. Septimus’s voice is then excluded from the diagnostic discussion as Bradshaw takes Rezia to another room. The removal of the hysteric from their own history is far from simply metaphorical; Woolf’s narrative presents the literal exclusion of Septimus from his hysterical narrative. Upon their return from their “little talk” Septimus’s fate has been decided: he is to enter one of Bradshaw’s “homes ... where we will teach you to rest” and to (re)gain a sense of *proportion*.<sup>388</sup>

For Bradshaw, Septimus’s condition, so he tells Rezia, is not a question of madness but, of “not having a sense of proportion”, and to Bradshaw, proportion is *law* — the law, one should note, also determined that suicide was an illegal act.<sup>389</sup>

Shortly and kindly Sir William explained to her the state of the case. He had threatened to kill himself. There was no alternative. It was a question of law.<sup>390</sup>

In response to a suicide threat, “you invoke proportion” through bed rest, solitude and silence and the patient is only released upon reaching their ideal weight, otherwise known as the correct physical proportion.<sup>391</sup> It is also proportion which governs Bradshaw’s practice:

To his patients he gave three-quarters of an hour; and if in this exacting science which has to do with what, after all, we know nothing about — the nervous system, the human brain — a doctor loses his sense of proportion, as a doctor he fails. Health we must have; and health is proportion[.]<sup>392</sup>

So, Septimus is secluded, prohibited (and inhibited) from expressing his views, until he too shares Bradshaw’s sense of proportion for it is proportion that is law, and the law that governs England, that makes her prosper; to deviate is death, the only solution: conversion.

Proportion, divine proportion, Sir William’s goddess [...] Worshiping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion.<sup>393</sup>



Conversion is the formidable sister of proportion who “feasts on the wills of the weakly ... offers help, but desires power” and dwells in “Sir Wiliam’s heart, though concealed, as she mostly is, under some plausible disguise; some venerable name; love, duty, self-sacrifice”.<sup>394</sup> Septimus, like Bradshaw’s own wife who “had gone under” fifteen years earlier, must be converted, and a sense of proportion instilled.<sup>395</sup> Bradshaw saves the weak, restores their sense of proportion, ensuring that any “unsocial impulses ... were held in control” for the good of society: “[n]aked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless received the impress of Sir William’s will. He swooped; he devoured. He shut people up”.<sup>396</sup> And all this is achieved through “the combination of decision and humanity that endeared Sir William so greatly to the relations of his victims”.<sup>397</sup> The “plausible disguise” of humanity is undermined and the sadistic nature of Bradshaw is exposed – his patients are his victims and he is celebrated by their relations, not the victims themselves, for it is the relations who depend upon proportion. Through Bradshaw the relations are saved from the social embarrassment the hysteric may cause them, their sordid family secrets (such as those of Dora’s father who offered his daughter to the husband of his extramarital lover or Augustine’s step-father who abused her) remain secrets as the one threatening to expose them is silenced, shut away, and good society can maintain the masquerade. Reinforcing the notion of it being nothing more than a veneer of humanity and understanding which “endears” Bradshaw to his victims’ “Proportion”-conscious relations is the following impression from one who is not taken in by the “plausible disguise”: “But Rezia Warren Smith cried, walking down Harley Street, that she did not like that man”.<sup>398</sup> Rezia, in contrast to the English upper-middle class, as an Italian immigrant, is an outsider and as such is not driven by social respectability, nor does she desire Septimus’s conversion.

### **Defiance: the Rejection of Phallocentric Proportion**

It is important to examine the scene presenting Septimus’s suicide as it presents a significantly different portrait of suicide to that succinctly illustrated in Dr Holmes’ response: “‘The Coward!’”<sup>399</sup> The common accusation of cowardice rallied against Septimus is not supported by the moments leading up to Septimus’s death, which suggest something quite to the contrary.



Septimus's and Rezia's afternoon, following their Harley Street appointment, is a carefree one allowing Rezia a moment's celebration as she glimpses her husband as he used to be: "How it rejoiced her, that! Not for weeks had they laughed like this together, poking fun privately like married people".<sup>400</sup> Septimus similarly rejoices in the moment, looking upon the hat they have produced for Mrs Filmer's daughter: "It was wonderful. Never had he done anything which had made him feel so proud."<sup>401</sup> The moment does not last as "a tap at the door" disrupts their laughter as their happy reunion is fractured by the sudden threat of Bradshaw's "proportion".<sup>402</sup> The tap turns out to be a false alarm, simply the daily delivery of the newspaper by a small girl who sucks her thumb and over whom Rezia coos. And so, whilst Rezia plays and dances with the child, Septimus reads the paper eventually falling asleep to the sounds of their game: "He was very tired. He was very happy. He would sleep."<sup>403</sup>

The threat of Bradshaw returns once Septimus awakens and the couple's contemplative recollections of their courtship are abruptly interrupted as Rezia notes the time and recalls their imminent separation. Septimus is angered by the demands of Bradshaw, the peace he found with Rezia just moments earlier is disrupted: "Holmes and Bradshaw were on him! The brute with the red nostrils was snuffing into every secret place!"<sup>404</sup> His thoughts and writings no longer safe he demands Rezia burn them, "for she was with him ... she understood".<sup>405</sup> In an act of allegiance Rezia refuses, insisting that "[t]hey could not separate them against their wills"; she collects the papers, binding them with the silk which just moments earlier had helped bind her and Septimus together as they constructed the hat, promising that "no one should get at them".<sup>406</sup> She stands beside Septimus, against Holmes and Bradshaw:

men who never weighed less than eleven stone six, who sent their wives to court, men who made ten thousand a year and talked of proportion; who differed in their verdicts (for Holmes said one thing, Bradshaw another), yet judges they were; who mixed the vision and the sideboard; saw nothing clear, yet ruled, yet inflicted. Over them she triumphed.<sup>407</sup>

Rezia, in contrast to Bradshaw's image of grateful relatives, rejects Bradshaw's weighted measure of proportion and it is this refutation that marks her triumph. But, again, the united couple are divided by the very real threat of the sound of Holmes' footsteps upon the stairs. Rezia rushes out and, "like a little hen, with her wings spread barring his passage" she attempts to keep proportion at bay; "But



Holmes persevered".<sup>408</sup> And, so, Septimus defies their law, flees from the threat of their proportion, he gives the world what it has been clamouring for, he kills himself.

The paragraph representing Septimus's suicide is related in the third person but, through the use of free indirect discourse the subjective passage gives a voice to the hysteric, telling their *hystory*. And, in contrast to the consultation at Harley Street which consciously excluded the hysteric to foreground the physician, the moment is presented through the words of the hysteric; the rebellion, so often controlled and silenced, is offered to the reader, without prior interpretation, or staging.

Holmes was coming upstairs. Holmes would burst open the door. Holmes would say, 'In a funk, eh?' Holmes would get him. But no; not Holmes; not Bradshaw. Getting up rather unsteadily, hopping indeed from foot to foot, he considered Mrs. Filmer's nice clean bread-knife with 'Bread' carved on the handle. Ah, but one mustn't spoil that. The gas fire? But it was too late now. Holmes was coming. Razors he might have got, but Rezia, who always did that sort of thing, had packed them. There remained only the window, the large Bloomsbury lodging house window; the tiresome, the troublesome, and rather melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out. It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him). Holmes and Bradshaw liked that sort of thing. (He sat on the sill.) But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. 'I'll give it you!' he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings.

'The coward!' cried Dr. Holmes, bursting the door open. Rezia ran to the window, she saw; she understood.<sup>409</sup>

Septimus's suicide is clearly in response to the threat Holmes embodies; prior to this the idea of Septimus committing suicide has been through others. The one occasion Septimus mentions killing himself is in relation to society "clamouring" for him to commit suicide. Septimus's final words, "I'll give it to you", are a direct response to this clamouring, the you referring to the world governed by the likes of Holmes and Bradshaw with their sense of proportion.

Septimus's suicide may, on one level, appear to be giving Holmes, Bradshaw and "Proportion" what they desire as it eliminates the threat Septimus and his hysteria presents. The suicide contains the hysteria as the hysteric is silenced; their *hystory* can, then, only ever be presented by the likes of Holmes and Brad-



shaw and, therefore, can be staged in accordance with the dictates of proportion. However, Woolf's narration and its employment of free indirect discourse to represent Septimus's thoughts in the moments leading up to his death means Septimus's *hystory* has already been told and any re-telling would expose the *phallacy* of its (re)appropriation or (re)staging. In doing so the narration silences phallocentrism and gives voice to the hysteric, thus subverting the socio-cultural norms. One can see the beginnings of an attempt at restaging when one considers Holmes' reaction to Septimus's death. The doctor, in a belated act of "sympathy" (which, alongside "love, duty, self-sacrifice", is one of conversion's venerable disguises) gives Rezia a sedative to shield her from the unseeable; "she must not see him", after all.<sup>410</sup> If there are no witnesses to Septimus's suicide it can be silenced, the *hystory* cannot be retold. But, Rezia has seen it, "she saw; she understood" – Holmes' act of protection (of whom? Rezia? Holmes? Bradshaw?) is superfluous, Rezia has seen and, most significantly, Septimus's voice has been heard, his *hystory* told. The suicide can no longer be constrained to "their idea of tragedy" or cowardice, nor can it be reduced to a moment of hysteria: Septimus's focalisation does not afford them the opportunity to stage his action, he will not be controlled, nor will his act of defiance be silenced. Woolf's narration gives the hysteric their voice with which they can speak "vigorously, violently" against proportion, against phallocentrism and as such, Woolf's narration is an act of defiance which, in turn, represents the defiant hysteric who is usually silenced and (re)staged as something to be controlled and curbed.

Septimus's chosen act of suicide is a significant one: the male hysteric is an oxymoron, a joining of two opposites, a blurring of the socio-political divides and is, thus, a rejection (and exposure) of the binaries upon which phallocentrism depends. Septimus's hysteria situates him *beyond* phallocentrism, *beyond* such binaries and his final act similarly defies and blurs gender conventions. He first contemplates the bread knife, an object which confuses the normative gender binary – it is at once feminine, in that it is a domestic instrument, but as a knife it is synonymous with the phallus and, therefore, inherently masculine. His razors, almost definitively masculine, have been contained by the feminine (for Rezia has packed them) and the gaspipe, unquestionably feminine (through its associations with the home and, particularly, the oven), is rejected for a lack of time, thus, contained by the masculine (the imminent arrival of Holmes). So it is to the window Septimus



turns, that which divides the public sphere (the realm of the masculine) from the private space (the domestic domain of the feminine). However, the window, in all its translucency, hardly accomplishes a total division of the two diametrically opposed fields. The window provides the private with access to the public, and vice versa; it blurs the division between the two. The window is both there and not at all, like Lacan's theorising of woman ("Her being not all in the phallic function does not mean that she is not in it at all" <sup>411</sup>), it is not there and it is *not* not there. However, the window *is* a physical boundary between the public and the private, the subject is not meant to cross that boundary (unlike with a door); you may look through it but you are not meant to pass through it. So Septimus crosses the *not* not boundary, he sits on the window sill waiting, not inside and not outside, but somewhere other. And from this not-place he begins his journey away from proportion and out of phallogentric oppression. Septimus's journey begins and ends traversing the boundaries of phallogentrism that are designed to be contain him; in both life and death he works *beyond* society, both rejecting and exposing its totalitarian boundaries, its phallacies.

## Septimus and Clarissa: Unity, Defiance, and Difference

### **"Death was defiance": Unspoken Understanding, Shared Experience and Communication *Beyond* Phallogentrism<sup>412</sup>**

It is through death, specifically his suicide, that the lives of Clarissa and Septimus touch. Septimus's suicide reaches Clarissa at her party through the murmured utterances of Lady Bradshaw: "a very sad case. A young man (that is what Sir William is telling Mr. Dalloway) had killed himself".<sup>413</sup> Septimus's suicide refuses to remain yet another of the Bradshaw's "sad cases", as it finds another narrator, someone else who refuses the phallogentric staging of the(ir) tragedy, sees *beyond* the simple binaries of having and not having proportion (the phallus). It is Clarissa Dalloway, in a moment of solitary contemplation during her party that evening, who understands Septimus's defiance, who sympathises with his horror of Bradshaw's proportion: "life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that".<sup>414</sup> It is through Clarissa that Septimus's *hystory* is re-viewed, re-



told. It is Clarissa to whom the narrative turns to continue its defiance of phallogocentric proportion.

Clarissa, like Septimus, is repelled by Bradshaw: “she did not know exactly what it was about Sir William; what exactly she disliked”.<sup>415</sup> Clarissa, having witnessed one of Bradshaw’s consultations, having seen “some poor wretch sobbing, she remembered, in the waiting-room”, concluded that, despite the fact he was “at the head of his profession” and “extraordinarily able”, “what she felt was, one wouldn’t like Sir William to see one unhappy. No; not that man”.<sup>416</sup> Clarissa’s dislike is intuitive, (a subjective response that Bradshaw would deny), it delves beyond the socially accepted image of Sir William, implying that Clarissa, in contrast to her guests and social peers, perceives something other in Bradshaw and, therefore, the society that he both upholds and represents. Clarissa’s impressions expose the inadequacy of appearance as an illustration of character and, thus, serve to support Woolf’s argument against the Materialist’s reliance upon the material by presenting a character through emotion and intuition — a complete rejection of the absolute in favour of the evanescent. Clarissa, therefore, is situated both within yet beyond the society she inhabits; she understands the image of respectability the likes of the Bradshaws rely upon for social success is simply a veneer masquerading as something much more than it really is, and rejects it for the pretence it is.

Whilst Clarissa’s repulsion aligns her with Septimus, it is her response to his suicide that demonstrates the strength of their connection. It is during her party that Clarissa is exposed to the news of Septimus’s death by the Bradshaws, a scene which I shall explore later in this chapter, and demonstrates her dislike of the couple. Following her encounter with the Bradshaws Clarissa retreats to an empty room where she remains in solitary contemplation of Septimus’s suicide and of life itself. Once isolated, Clarissa is able to consider Septimus’s suicide in full, away from her role as party hostess: “There was nobody. The party’s splendour fell to the floor, so strange it was to come on alone in finery.”<sup>417</sup> Clarissa is dressed to be with people, her “finery” marking the costume she must adopt for that night’s performance — yet once again appearance fails to represent the character behind it, Clarissa appears to be like her peers and yet she rejects their hypocrisy. It is following this establishment of Clarissa’s literal isolation that the story of the suicide is introduced and revealed in more detail. It is only when Clarissa is away from



the Bradshaws, her party and life that she is able to contemplate fully what she has just experienced.

The strength of Clarissa's connection with Septimus is such that "when she was told, first, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed; her body burnt"; she imagines the scene of his suicide with such vividness that it is almost to the extent of "living" the experience:

Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it?<sup>418</sup>

And so Clarissa contemplates Septimus's suicide, she looks *beyond* the sad case to perceive something *more than* an accident and as she imagines the experience she considers what prompted the act and turns to question those from whom Septimus was supposed to receive help. The experience, then, is not concerned with a young man's cowardice and, as such, Clarissa "did not pity him", rather she sees in his death something more, she sees defiance:

Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew them apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death.<sup>419</sup>

In death Septimus embraces something, a thing "that mattered" but that got lost in life, "defaced, obscured" and lost "in the corruption, lies, chatter".<sup>420</sup> In Lacanian theory the subject identifies the self as different and separate from the (m)other — a movement which Lacan terms the mirror phase. It is at this moment that the subject enters the Symbolic and acquires language, but the Symbolic is governed by the *nom du père*, the law of the father, which constitutes the third term which divides the subject from the absolute truth. It is only in death that the subject can escape the Symbolic and the *nom du père* that governs it. Through his death Septimus is able to communicate that which in life was inexpressible, something beyond the realm of Bradshaw's proportion. In death Septimus is able to obtain that which had evaded him throughout life hence, "there was embrace in death" and Septimus is no longer a divided subject. It is Clarissa's sense that in death Septimus has found that which evaded, or was denied him in life, that echoes Lacan.



Clarissa explicitly associates Septimus's suicide with a proactive response to a suffocating society — "death was defiance". It is this which aligns Clarissa's impressions with the feminist re-readings of Lacan, specifically the work of Irigaray whom I touched upon earlier in this chapter. Irigaray examined Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and, of particular importance to this study, presented key insights into the hysteric as a figure that offered the potential to subvert the phallogentric system which demands the suppression of the feminine. The hysteric, arguably, escapes the Symbolic by finding a language which is beyond the *nom du père* — such as Anna O. who, quite literally, rejected the language of the father and expressed her grief through a somatic discourse. Septimus's defiance echoes the hysteric's potential for subverting phallogentrism as suicide becomes another hysterical means of salvaging an(-)other voice. Septimus's defiance, through Clarissa, still has the potential to subvert as she reads his story as something other than the act of cowardice presented by Bradshaw and the law of proportion. It is only when isolated from society that Clarissa is able to consider the suicide as defiance, when she has removed herself from society and situated herself beyond the law of the doctor — Clarissa's sentiment can only find expression outside, quite literally, of society, where, like the hysteric's discourse, it is beyond the Symbolic and the oppressive *nom du père*.

Clarissa's subsequent contemplation of Sir William Bradshaw and his attitude towards his patients furthers the association with Lacan:

a great doctor, yet to her obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage – forcing your soul, that was it – if this young man had gone to him, and Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that?<sup>421</sup>

Bradshaw is clearly associated with oppression, explicitly the oppression of sexual passion, which returns us to Lacan. Within a Lacanian framework feminine sex is understood to be *jouissance*, an undefinable moment of excess, most readily described as the female orgasm; it is cast beyond the Symbolic, denoting the site or moment at which language fails. Bradshaw is situated firmly within the Symbolic; he is devoid of sex and lust and impresses himself through the power of language – with his word Septimus is forced to face institutionalisation as Bradshaw removes him, the hysterical other, from society. Bradshaw by impressing himself upon others oppresses their voices, forcing them to inhabit the role he, and patri-



archy, demands of them. Clarissa's notion that Bradshaw "forces a person's soul" reflects a feminist notion that the feminine is forced into a role of silent subservience – an intolerable life of domestic servitude and oppression. It is this which firmly situates Bradshaw as representing a dominant patriarchal voice oppressing the other by repressing their voice. Through the associations with Lacanian thought Clarissa's relationship with Septimus is furthered; she not only empathises with Septimus to the extent that she "experiences" his death but she rejects the oppression Bradshaw embodies and, thus, is situated alongside the hysteric, beyond a phallogentric society. Woolf's impression-driven narrative not only enables the representation of Clarissa's empathetic experience, but the impression allows the two otherwise unconnected characters to be united which, in turn, revives rather than silences the hysteric.

Septimus's death offers Clarissa an insight into her own life; it is a revelation, much like that which he himself experienced earlier (but we, as readers, were not permitted access to), a "great revelation": "She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living".<sup>422</sup> Septimus's death, the great revelation, liberates Clarissa, as I shall discuss below, so she finds herself able, once again, to enjoy life, and to lose "herself in the process of living".<sup>423</sup> And so, with liberating revelation Clarissa returns to her party and to enjoy what remains of "the extraordinary night".<sup>424</sup>

### **Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Smith: Two Sides of the Same Coin**

In a letter to Gerald Duckworth written after the publication of *Mrs Dalloway* on the 14th June 1925, Woolf discusses Roger Fry's observation that Septimus is "the most essential part of Mrs. D[.]", adding "I certainly did mean" that Septimus and "Mrs. Dalloway should be entirely dependent upon each other".<sup>425</sup>

Whilst working on *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf wrote the following in her diary:

In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life & death, sanity & insanity; I want to criticise the social system, & show it at work, at its most intense[.]<sup>426</sup>

In the scene examined above the pairing of "life & death", "sanity & insanity" is evident, and through the scenes involving Sir William Bradshaw the social critique Woolf desired is similarly apparent. Conventionally, one would expect the sane and the insane to be polarised but Woolf refuses to do so. In a highly original



move, Woolf does not present Clarissa and Septimus as binary opposites; both characters are actually united through their differences and their questioning of society.

Clarissa, like Septimus, rejects the role society demands she fulfil and she is subsequently perceived to be a failure. Septimus, if we recall, was upbraided for neglecting his spousal duties by Dr Holmes. Lady Bruton believes that it is Clarissa who has hindered her husband's political aspiration: "It might have been better if Richard had married a woman with less charm, who would have helped him more in his work. He had lost his chance in the cabinet".<sup>427</sup> By contrast, Lady Bradshaw having been *converted* to her husband's ideal, her indoctrinated sense of proportion has far from hindered his career; she is the model wife who waits for the appropriate cue to act and is, in Lady Bruton's opinion, who Clarissa should aspire to be like. However, within the novel, Lady Bradshaw is by no means an ideal figure of femininity, rather, as "the typical successful man's wife", she is a tragic, desperate character, whom Clarissa describes as a "poor goose".<sup>428</sup> Lady Bradshaw epitomises phallocentrism's oppression of the feminine: Sir William "swooped and devoured" her, brought her back in line with his ideal and stages her. Clarissa observes Lady Bradshaw at her party dressed "in silver and grey, barking for invitations, Duchesses, the typical successful man's wife".<sup>429</sup> The Duchess obediently, like a performing sea-lion, draws society's attention to her husband, speaking as all good wives should from "the shelter of a common femininity [of] a common pride in the illustrious qualities of husbands".<sup>430</sup> She is the perfect accessory; not only does she herald her husband's "illustrious qualities" (thus, ensuring his commendable acts are publicly proclaimed whilst maintaining a suitable veneer of modesty), but she complements him physically too, her grey costume accentuating his grey hair, that physical feature he treasures for the distinguished appearance it affords him. Lady Bradshaw is another piece of Bradshaw's image of proportion, she is the perfect passenger for his "low, powerful, grey motor" with its "silver grey rugs heaped in it, to keep the ladyship warm while she waited" along with the "grey furs", "grey, so, to match its sober suavity".<sup>431</sup> Grey is the colour of proportion and it is this colour with which Bradshaw accessorises himself, and his wife. Clarissa, on the other hand, wears green, a colour which aligns her with nature and the pastoral England Septimus nostalgically longs for.



E. M. Forster's "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf", written the same year *Mrs Dalloway* was published, considers the pairing of the characters Clarissa and Septimus through the news of his suicide:

Does she likewise commit suicide? I thought so the first time I read the book; not at my second reading, nor is the physical act important, for she is certainly left with the knowledge —inside knowledge — of what suicide is. The societified lady and the obscure maniac are in a sense the same person. His foot has slipped through the gay surface on which she stands — that is all the difference between them.<sup>432</sup>

For Forster the connection between Clarissa and Sepimus is concerned with their being "twin souls"; it is not dependent on a more substantial, or material link, such as their both dying but rather upon something which recurs throughout the novel, the idea of there being "unity beneath the multiplicity".<sup>433</sup> Later in the essay Forster reinforces his preference for the intangible over the certain as he declares:

It is easy for a novelist to describe what a character thinks of; look at Mrs Humphry Ward. But to convey the actual process of thinking is a creative feat, and I know of no one except Virginia Woolf who has accomplished it.<sup>434</sup>

One could add, that it is easy for a novelist to describe and to render definitively relationships, whether physical, thematic, or metaphorical, but to create connections, trivial, fantastic, evanescent, like "that spider's thread of attachment" connecting Richard Dalloway to his wife as he traverses the streets of London, is a creative feat.<sup>435</sup>

It is these invisible web-like connections that Elizabeth Foley O'Connor considers in her essay "Solid Reverberations: An Analysis of Virginia Woolf's Use of Objects". O'Connor considers, as does Donna K. Reed in "Merging Voices: *Mrs Dalloway* and *No Place*", how Woolf's subjective presentation of the material produces a series of unconscious relationships, a "community" founded upon shared experiences, such as the sky-writer scene I discussed above, yet divided spatially and/or temporally. O'Connor explains, in reference to *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, "that objects in these works are used to comment on, unify, represent and also stand in opposition to specific characters".<sup>436</sup> The essay recognises "Woolf's interest in the fluidity of objects and the way they decompose and recompose themselves in the mind of the viewers", such as the variations in the



sky-writer's perceived message noted earlier, and echoes Woolf's desire to destabilise the Materialists' narrative conventions: the "solid objects" the Materialists depended upon are destabilised by the multiple, subjective (de/re)compositions. Reed, like O'Connor, argues that these multiple subjectivities are intertwined; observers are united in "a communion of understanding, sweet if only momentary", as the narration moves fluidly, and indistinguishably, from one focaliser to another to form a "community of intersubjectivity".<sup>437</sup> O'Connor explains that objects have a transitory function by "which the narrator passes from mind to another by means of a common object of contemplation".<sup>438</sup> Significantly, this hints at the unconscious connections which Woolf employs to construct a relationship which is not dependent on physical proximity or association, such as Septimus and Clarissa's. The relationship between Septimus and Clarissa is often reduced to an examination of their positions as hysterical figures or their homosexuality, as argued by Emily Jensen, to whom I shall return to shortly. O'Connor reads in the novel a series of "intersubjective meditation[s] of the solid", suggesting that "the skywriting plane brings the crowd together, breaking through the realm of their individual silences as they visibly show their attempts to read the message".<sup>439</sup> A crowd of strangers are united in a silent communication, their "intersubjective meditation" of the object creating "a sense of collective togetherness" uniting Mr Bowley, Sarah Bletchley, Rezia Warren Smith and Clarissa Dalloway.<sup>440</sup>

In "Clarissa Dalloway's Respectable Suicide" Emily Jensen employs close textual analysis to draw parallels between Septimus and Clarissa, commenting that the former's "madness is the overt expression of her [Clarissa's] more guarded emotional life".<sup>441</sup> Jensen reiterates the parallels between Septimus's and Clarissa's psychological states, arguing that Septimus's "madness is the overt expression of the battle that is constantly raging in Clarissa's mind".<sup>442</sup> The difference being, therefore, that which is overtly expressed and that which is not expressed, silenced by social decorum. For Jensen, Septimus's suicide brings to the fore of Clarissa's mind "the beauty and fun of the life she has denied herself", and:

Clarissa's approval of Septimus's literal suicide reveals the extent to which she understands the self-destruction involved in her own life. She recognizes that she has committed her own kind of suicide: she has in fact committed one of the most common of suicides for women, that respectable destruction of the self in the interest of the other[.]<sup>443</sup>



Jensen argues that Septimus's suicide reminds Clarissa of that which she has "denied herself", and that denial is akin to the loss Septimus mourns: both are responses to a past experience of homosexual love. Jensen draws attention to the words and imagery shared by the two characters, arguing that this rhetorical mirroring suggests that *both* Clarissa and Septimus commit (a form of) suicide in response to their inability to marry their homosexuality with contemporary society's expectations and demands:

Septimus appears to retain his love for Evans through visions and voices of the dead, while Clarissa more obviously denies her love for Sally Seton, accepting conventional heterosexual life as all that is possible for her.<sup>444</sup>

Jensen's argument focuses solely upon fixing the two characters' (homo)sexuality and in doing so negates questions regarding, for instance, Septimus's broader experience of loss, and Clarissa's rejection of Peter. Most pertinent is the absence of other "respectable suicides" from the discussion; Lady Bradshaw is the most notable one, a clear victim of Bradshaw's proportion. Sally Seton, who "quite unexpectedly" married "a bald man with a large buttonhole", one could argue, similarly settled for a respectable suicide, a denial of her homosexuality, but again, this is not examined, perhaps because Sally appears the most contented of the reunited Bourton trio.<sup>445</sup> It is not the concern of this study to determine and fix the characters' sexuality in the manner demonstrated by literary critics such as Jensen. However the manner in which the homosexual undercurrents of the novel are read holds significance, most notably in chapter five when I consider *The Hours* as an adaptation and response to the critical readings of the novel which sought to "queer" *Clarissa Dalloway*. In addition, it is pertinent to consider Woolf's arguments against the Materialists and her determination not to fix and categorise a character — in fixing Clarissa's sexuality, categorically determining her to be a lesbian, Jensen is negating a significant element of Woolf's writing. This is reinforced by E. M. Forster's reading of the novel: he warns that placing too much emphasis on and over-stressing the material detail would be "disastrous" to the novel, "to its shimmering fabric of mysticism, unity beneath multiplicity, twin souls ...".<sup>446</sup> This study, then, is interested in how the examination of homosexuality in *Mrs Dalloway* has gained increasing interest from critics and how this, in turn, has become a critical thread of the web of intertextuality influencing recent adaptations of the novel.



# Clarissa, Criticism and Homosexuality

## “Clarissa as Lesbian”

In “Who Do We Think Clarissa Dalloway is Anyway? Re-Search Into Seventy Years Of Woolf Criticism” Laura A. Smith produces an overview of critical engagements with *Mrs Dalloway* since its publication in 1925, tracing critical readings of Clarissa across the decades: “She has gone from being a “non-person” during the 1920s debates surrounding character depiction,” having “been ignored in favor of Peter”, to being a thwarted lesbian in the feminisms of the 1990s”.<sup>447</sup> Smith traces the increased critical interest in Clarissa Dalloway, highlighting how early negation of her character in the 1920s was replaced by a class-based disparagement of Clarissa in the 1930s, through to a formalist analysis in the 1940s which sought to establish Clarissa, as opposed to Peter, as the novel’s central character. In the 1950s early discussions of Clarissa’s (homosexual) relationship with Sally Seton emerge and Smith continues her historical overview focusing on the development of such readings, save for a brief return to issues of class in the 1960s. In conjunction with her synopsis of the literary criticism surrounding *Mrs Dalloway*, Smith asks us to consider how literary criticism is affected by its contemporary socio-political climate, raising questions such as why “some reviewers wanted to find a hero” in the 1920s.<sup>448</sup> Smith argues that historicising “Clarissa Dalloway’s critical reception ... reveals the complexities of her fictional character and reconstitutes a history of our culture as readers and writers”.<sup>449</sup> Smith’s argument is pertinent when considering the web of intertextuality operating on any given adaptation; if critical reception is influenced by its contemporary culture, then so too is the film adaptation. If, as I shall illustrate in my analysis of *The Hours* in chapter five, the adaptation draws upon the critical readings of the literary source, we should consider not only the influence of contemporary culture as Smith infers, but we may also wish to consider how the adaptation engages with the previous decades of criticism. For, as Smith notes of historicising literary criticism for her students, an historical examination of critical reception takes us “beyond the current generation of interpretations” to reveal “the way the historical moment affects literary criticism” which, then, “allows [critical readers] to situate their own politics of reading within a complex history”.<sup>450</sup> In other words, it allows us to situate the adaptation within a complex critical history.



Smith, then, engages with the critical constructions of Clarissa's sexuality, specifically her homosexuality, situating the critical readings firmly within their cultural context, such as her comments regarding the need to perceive a (male) hero in the post-war decade haunted by the disintegration of the male hero through the emergence of the male hysteric. Smith argues that critics writing in the 1950s were "not ready for the 'L' word and, in fact, went to great pains to avoid it", choosing to read the Clarissa-Sally relationship as one of androgyny, thus, recognising it as homosocial as opposed to homosexual. Androgyny, rather neatly, evades the lesbian debate by removing sexuality from the equation. In the 1970s sexuality became, and has remained, "essential".<sup>451</sup> This period was one of feminist reclamation in which critics "saw the possibility of rescuing Woolf from her critical legacy", and one can see the work of Bonnie Kime Scott (cited earlier) as a culmination of earlier efforts across the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>452</sup> It was, again significant for this study's analysis of *The Hours*, a period in which biographical criticism influenced the readings of Clarissa's character. Smith draws upon Mark Spilka's "On Mrs Dalloway's Absent Grief: A Psycholiterary Speculation" (1979) which, she explains, "uses Woolf's memoir as evidence for her inability to depict sexuality", and concludes that "Clarissa's portrait is finally a 'psycho-literary copout'".<sup>453</sup> In 1976 Woolf's *Moments of Being* was posthumously published and the decade also saw the publication of Woolf's diaries, whilst Leonard Woolf's condensed edition *A Writer's Diary* was published in 1953, the five-volume complete diaries were published between 1977 and 1984; Woolf's letters were published in six volumes between 1975 and 1980, and Quentin Bell's famous two volume biography of his aunt were published in 1972. It is hardly surprising that the critical discourse became concerned with the biographical given the sudden availability of Woolf's biographical material. If there is any need to evidence the influence of the cultural climate on the critical reception of a novel then surely the sudden influx of "psycholiterary" readings of Clarissa coinciding with the publication of Woolf's diaries, letters, biographies etc. speaks volumes.

### **"The most exquisite moment of her whole life"**

In the 1990s literary criticism of *Mrs Dalloway* was predominantly, although not exclusively, concerned with Clarissa Dalloway's sexuality, or rather her homosexuality. Jensen's exploration of the novel discussed how the themes of hys-



teria and suicide were directly linked to the novel's homosexual undercurrents, concluding that both Septimus and Clarissa had suppressed or denied their homosexuality resulting in a literal and metaphorical, or "respectable", suicide. This is also the decade that saw the publication of Cunningham's *The Hours* and a new biography on Woolf by Hermione Lee, a work which demonstrated a shift in the way Woolf's sexuality and hysteria were both constructed and received. I will discuss these texts in detail in chapter five, but for now it is necessary to analyse "Clarissa the lesbian".

The debate surrounding Clarissa's sexuality has, in the main, centred on the youthful relationship between Clarissa and Sally Seton, represented through a series of flashbacks to one summer at Bourton which repeatedly interrupt the present. In one key scene the friends share a kiss under the stars, an experience Clarissa deems "the most exquisite moment of her whole life".<sup>454</sup> The scene occurs one evening as the group of friends go for a stroll after dinner:

She and Sally fell a little behind. ... Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt she had just been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it — a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling! — when old Joseph and Peter faced them:

'Star-gazing?' said Peter.

It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!<sup>455</sup>

The manner in which the kiss is recollected and the mode in which it is so harshly interrupted have proven the most useful for those considering Clarissa's sexuality: an exquisite moment violated by the sudden presence of Peter Walsh. In addition, critics have analysed Clarissa's recollections of Sally during that summer at Bourton, scenes in which Sally shocks her peers by running naked down a corridor to retrieve her sponge from the bathroom and, to the horror of Clarissa's aunt, dares to have a centrepiece of just the heads of "hollyhocks, dahlias — all sorts of flowers that had never been seen together ... swim[ming] on water in bowls".<sup>456</sup> Clarissa's recollections of Sally are interspersed with questions of love, specifically "this falling in love with women".<sup>457</sup> Clarissa questions if "her relation with Sally in the old days" could have, "after all, been love?"<sup>458</sup> And it is this love that critics have leapt upon. However, one may wonder if this love was born from ho-



moerotic desire, or simply that Sally Seton was someone extraordinary, whose difference, her otherness, sparked in Clarissa some curiosity, provided the key to that something more than what she had experienced to date. Or, preferably, it was a bit of everything. Sally offers Clarissa something other, and it is necessary not to restrict the potential of this otherness to homoerotic desire, but to consider what else Clarissa's relationship with Sally presented. This otherness surfaces throughout the sequence in which Clarissa recollects Sally:

It was an extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed, with that quality which, she hadn't got it herself, she always envied — a sort of abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything; a quality much commoner in foreigners than in Englishwomen. Sally always said she had French blood in her veins ... They sat up till all hours talking. Sally it was who made her feel, for the first time, how sheltered the life at Bourton was. She knew nothing about sex — nothing about social problems. ... 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.<sup>459</sup>

Sally, then, gave Clarissa access to the world beyond Bourton, a world which Clarissa hungrily sought to know. Perhaps it is lesbianism, perhaps it is not, but Clarissa's "respectable suicide" has denied her an(-)other life full of other experiences.

This is a theme that similarly resonates in her relationship with Peter Walsh, one which she returns to during a day filled with momentary contemplations of a past which could have provided a very different present. It is Peter who is first recollected and it is to Peter she finds herself returning, suddenly wondering, "if he were with me now what would he say?"<sup>460</sup> It is her rejection of Peter's proposal of marriage that she finds herself returning to, repeatedly, wondering, questioning and justifying her decision:

So she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still making out that she had been right — and she had too — not to marry him. For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him. ... But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish.<sup>461</sup>

In Richard, Clarissa found freedom, she found some independence which Peter would never have granted her. Clarissa's "respectable suicide", as Jensen would



have her marriage to Richard, may also be perceived as her salvation. However, an unannounced visit from Peter reminds Clarissa of the difficulty of the decision that generated so much grief and anguish: "Now I remember how impossible it was ever to make up my mind — and why did I make up my mind — not to marry him, she wondered, that awful summer?"<sup>462</sup> This emotional oscillation reminds the reader of the ambivalence of life which Woolf sought to capture in her fiction — Clarissa cannot fix her impressions of a decision she made thirty years previous but demonstrates moments of ambivalence.

During the visit a consolatory kiss produces a rush of emotion, triggering the thought of what might have been:

And Clarissa had leant forward, taken his hand, drawn him to her, kissed him, — actually had felt his face on hers before she could down the brandishing of silver-flashing plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast, which, subsiding, left her holding his hand, patting his knee, and feeling as she sat back extraordinarily at her ease with him and light-hearted, all in a clap it came over her, If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!<sup>463</sup>

The imagery returns us to Clarissa's summer at Bourton,<sup>464</sup> with the reference to a "tropic gale" echoing Peter's tropical life in India, the warmth of the natural imagery providing a stark contrast to that describing Clarissa's current life: "The street was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone up into the tower alone".<sup>465</sup> However, it is not just Clarissa's life in the present that does not compare to her youth at Bourton. At her party, Clarissa compares her young guests with her younger self:

"For the young people could not talk. And why should they? Shout, embrace, swing, be up at dawn; carry sugar to ponies; kiss and caress the snouts of adorable chows; and then, all tingling and streaming, plunge and swim. But the enormous resources of the English language, the power it bestows, after all, of communicating feelings (at their age she and Peter would have been arguing all evening), was not for them."<sup>466</sup>

Bourton was a period without constraint, a time full of possibility — the possibilities of language, of emotion, and of a more liberated future. Sally introduces Clarissa to the possibility of freeing themselves from the shackles of social convention and exploring the politics of women's liberation. Peter, similarly develops Clarissa's understanding of the world, specifically through language: "She owed him words".<sup>467</sup> There is, at least, something more than the issue of sexuality in Clarissa's past and a determination to fix "Clarissa as lesbian" denies the possibili-



ties of something other than Bourton represents. In chapter five I return to examine how *The Hours* adapts Woolf's ambiguity in spite of fixing Clarissa's homosexuality and how the adaptation invites us to return to Woolf's novel and examine the issues raised by Clarissa's past in Bourton and Sally Seton's kiss and interrogate the criticism of the 1990s.

In "The Sane Woman in the Attic: Sexuality and Self-Authorship in *Mrs. Dalloway*", Jesse Wolfe demonstrates how it is not so easy to categorise Clarissa's choices in life as denial. Wolfe explores the "ambivalent portrayal" of Clarissa's marriage and sexuality, considering how the novel "participates in a modern trend in British and European social thought that combines antifoundational forebodings with pragmatic-conservative solutions".<sup>468</sup> Wolfe's consideration of the Dalloway marriage marks a departure from Jensen's notion of Clarissa's marriage to Richard being a respectable suicide. For Wolfe, Clarissa's selection of Richard over Peter, and even Sally, is not one concerned with social respectability as Jensen would have it, but of personal freedom. Clarissa's marriage provides her "with the space in which to imagine herself into being", and, for Wolfe, deserves credit for Clarissa's survival in contrast to Septimus's suicide.<sup>469</sup> The marriage, Wolfe argues, affords Clarissa a stable foundation which not only compensates for her vulnerability, frequently referenced in relation to a heart condition, but for the "passionate attachment" which, somewhat dangerously, affords her those moments of "ecstasy and self-discovery".<sup>470</sup> Richard then, far from restraining or subduing Clarissa, provides her with a secure base and the freedom to explore herself; the alternative is illustrated in Clarissa's "mirror" Septimus whose emotional "disintegration" leads to suicide.<sup>471</sup>

When considering the heroine's sexuality, Wolfe comments how "Clarissa's love for Peter and memory of Sally's kiss explode any notion of female desire being monogamous and heterosexual".<sup>472</sup> In addition, Wolfe notes, "nowhere is the multiplicity of Clarissa's mind better demonstrated than in its fluctuating choice of sexual object" as she desires, simultaneously, Peter Walsh, Sally Seton, and Richard Dalloway.<sup>473</sup> Rather than pigeonholing Clarissa's sexuality the novel affords Clarissa a multiplicity and fluidity which, Wolfe argues, situates Woolf within radical sexological debates that challenged philosophical and moral prejudices against homosexuality.



*Mrs Dalloway*, Wolfe continues, furthers its celebration of multiplicity as “paradoxes ... saturate representations of [Clarissa’s] sexuality” — not only do these reject an essentialist position, but they “refuse fixed meaning”.<sup>474</sup> For instance, Clarissa’s character is often perceived as being cold and distant, a trait which has been read as analogous with her repressed lesbianism, yet, she recounts “going cold with excitement and doing her hair in a kind of ecstasy” knowing that Sally was under the same roof as her.<sup>475</sup> Wolfe argues how in *Mrs Dalloway*, “feminine and masculine traits circulate in and out of both male and female characters ... carrying wildly divergent moral connotations”, with the fluidity being such “that even coldness can be associated with sexual possibility”.<sup>476</sup> The refusal to fix meaning is furthered, Wolfe argues, through the characters’ inability to articulate their desire(s) which “chastens readers who would formulate definite distinctions”.<sup>477</sup> The novel, therefore, not only refuses to fix the sexuality of its eponymous heroine but, through its stylistic ambivalence, invites re-readings and re-interpretation.<sup>478</sup>

### **Clarissa’s Party: Impressing and Identity**

Woolf’s employment of an impression-driven narration enables her to escape the confining conventions of her Materialist forebears; it not only privileges the experience over material detail but enables Woolf to produce a narration which refuses a singular authorial presence in favour of multiple, and often conflicting, perspectives. In doing so, *Mrs Dalloway* presents a variety of impressions of its eponymous heroine, a series of fragmented and fleeting images of Clarissa from which the reader constructs her character. This strategy is evident in the scenes explored above as Sir William’s impressions of Septimus revealed more of his own character than that of the hysteric. I am now going to turn to Clarissa’s party, the scene affording the greatest number of impressions of the hostess and therefore, the most fruitful passages with which to explore the multiplicity and ambiguity Woolf’s impression-driven narration generates.

The scenes depicting Clarissa’s party commence with the focalisation of Mrs Walker, the household cook, who is immersed in the food preparations below stairs before tracing her thoughts upwards to her impressions of the arriving guests. These impressions relate to events and actions that Mrs Walker herself cannot be observing, rather they are imagined, collated through past experience



and the impressions related by others. The narration here presents an interesting amalgamation of characters' voices, the details of the unseen scenes above stairs are recounted by other servants, including Clarissa's maid Lucy, yet are presented through the free indirect discourse of Mrs Walker: "But some lady with fair hair and silver ornaments had said, Lucy said, about the entrée, was it really made at home?"<sup>479</sup> The focus of the narration moves upstairs as a bell is heard signalling the arrival of the guests whose unseen appearance is narrated through the descriptions of the hired staff such as "Mrs. Parkinson (hired for parties)" and Mrs Barnet, "old Ellen Barnet, who had been with the family for forty years", who "ever so tactfully help[ed] Lady Lovejoy, who had some trouble with her underbodice".<sup>480</sup> The focalisation has remained with Mrs Walker who, as household cook, would have known, if not have been responsible for, the staff employed specifically for the party as well as having heard the servants' tales regarding Lady Lovejoy's underbodice.

The narrative remains upstairs as Mr Wilkins announces each guest as they arrive, with the focalisation shifting to Peter Walsh as Wilkins announces his arrival. Throughout this party scene Woolf frequently uses this strategy of introducing a character through the impressions of another before transferring focalisation to them. Employing free indirect discourse Woolf presents Peter's impressions of Mr Wilkins: "his manner was admirable; his family life must be irreproachable, except that it seemed impossible that [he] ... could ever have blundered into the nuisance of children".<sup>481</sup> It is the final comment, regarding children, that indicates the focalisation as being that of Peter, and if that was insufficient the clues continue with the following description of Clarissa playing hostess, "she was at her worst – effusive, insincere," before an extradiegetic narrator inserts a directive labelling the focaliser of the free indirect discourse: "He should have stayed at home and read a book, thought Peter Walsh".<sup>482</sup>

The focalisation then moves to the hostess who, whilst greeting her guests, surveys the scene, deciding whether her party is a failure or not. This is interrupted by Ellie Henderson's impressions of the party, before returning to Clarissa and the arrival of Sally Seton, now Lady Rosseter. The sudden arrival of the Prime Minister marks another shift as the focalisation returns to an overwhelmed and somewhat excited Ellie Henderson: "What a thing to tell Edith!"<sup>483</sup> Peter Walsh then returns to the fore with his impressions on the "snobbery of the English" and "the admirable Hugh" having "grown rather fatter, rather whiter" since their time at



Bourton.<sup>484</sup> His attention then turns to Clarissa in her “silver-green mermaid’s dress” moving about her guests:

with the most perfect ease and [the] air of a creature floating in its element. But age had brushed her ... There was a breath of tenderness; her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were all warmed through now, and she had about her ... an inexpressible dignity; an exquisite cordiality; as if she wished the whole world well, ... (But he was not in love.)<sup>485</sup>

Peter’s impressions of Clarissa provide a positive insight into the hostess, presenting a depth to her skills as a hostess proving her character to be something more than the “tinselly” heroine Woolf was concerned she had produced. Peter’s comments illustrate Clarissa’s growth since her youth at Bourton; she has, it would seem, grown somewhat more relaxed with herself and with life. The paragraph closes with Peter confirming that he no longer loves her, but the presence of such a comment only serves to remind the reader of his past relationship, drawing attention not only to the fact he was in love with her, but to the possibility of his still being in love with her. The moment of contemplation is closed within the brackets which contain it as the focalisation passes from Peter to the potential object of his desire, Clarissa.

Clarissa’s musings pass from guest to guest, direct discourse presents her greeting them whilst her impressions of them follow in free indirect discourse:

There was her old friend Sir Harry.  
“Dear Sir Harry!” she said, going up to the fine old fellow who had produced more bad pictures than any other two Academicians in the whole of St. John’s Wood.<sup>486</sup>

The conversation between the pair is revealed in fragments through Clarissa’s free indirect discourse, which then briefly shifts to Sir Harry to reveal his impression of her: “But he liked her; respected her, in spite of her damned, difficult, upper-class refinement, which made it impossible to ask Clarissa Dalloway to sit on his knee.”<sup>487</sup> The reference to Clarissa’s difficult refinement returns us to Peter’s impressions moments earlier which suggested she was less wooden and repressed than she had been in her youth.

Clarissa observes a conversation between two other guests:

Professor Brierly (Clarissa could see) wasn’t hitting it off with little Jim Hutton (who wore red socks, his black being at the laundry) about Milton. She interrupted.

She said she loved Bach. So did Hutton. That was the bond between them, and Hutton (a very bad poet) always felt that Mrs. Dal-



loway was far the best of the great ladies who took an interest in art. It was odd how strict she was. About music she was purely impersonal. She was rather a prig. But how charming to look at! She made her house so nice, if it weren't for her Professors. Clarissa had half a mind to snatch him off and set him down at the piano in the back room. For he played divinely.<sup>488</sup>

The above quotation illustrates Woolf's fluid transitions between the impressions of one character and another which combine to create an image of the trio's conversation. The parentheses permit the representation of more than one character's impressions, a strategy employed by Woolf in *Jacob's Room* as I noted in chapter two. Hutton's free indirect discourse interrupts Clarissa's but does not eliminate it completely, as Clarissa's voice remains, albeit in brackets. Woolf is producing a narrative in which a series of voices emerge, flitting between focalisers in a manner which refuses to privilege any one voice. Whilst the focalisation in the party-scene continually returns to Clarissa, Woolf does not allow Clarissa to dominate the narrative at the expense of the other characters' voices. It also enables Woolf to present a series of impressions of Clarissa, some contradictory, from which the reader is encouraged to construct their own impressions of the hostess.

Woolf employs parentheses later in the scene when Clarissa observes the arrival of Sir William and Lady Bradshaw:

She must go to Lady Bradshaw (in grey and silver, balancing like a sea-lion at the edge of its tank, barking for invitations, Duchesses, the typical successful man's wife), she must go and say ...  
But Lady Bradshaw anticipated her.<sup>489</sup>

In *Jacob's Room* Woolf used parentheses as a form of extradiegetic commentary on the nature of observation and understanding people. Earlier in this scene, parentheses contained Clarissa's thoughts of Hutton, whose own impressions of her were being presented. In the above quotation, parentheses do not introduce an additional focaliser, the parenthesised comments belong to Clarissa through whom the moment is being seen; rather they act as a means of discerning between Clarissa's immediate thoughts, such as going to Lady Bradshaw, and her secondary thoughts which convey Clarissa's impressions of Lady Bradshaw. This is an interesting move made by Woolf as it allows her to create the notion of a person's mind leaping off in various, associated directions, as well as enabling Woolf to illustrate the natures of both Clarissa and Lady Bradshaw through the impressions the former has of the latter.



Clarissa's impression of Lady Bradshaw as a sea-lion draws upon how Lady Bradshaw carries herself and not only reveals Lady Bradshaw's character but, critically, illustrates Clarissa's relationship with Lady Bradshaw and others like her. Clarissa is clearly ill at ease with the brash, "look-at-me" demand for attention which she perceives from Lady Bradshaw. However, what is more interesting is the comment that closes the parentheses: "the typical successful man's wife". This statement echoes Lady Bruton's comments on Clarissa being ill-suited to the role of politician's wife, indirectly blaming her for Richard's lack of success in politics. It is interesting that Clarissa should express such a dislike of the "type" of wife others would have her be. This suggests that it is not merely Clarissa's disposition, or ill-health, which makes her ill-suited for such a role but rather she expressly rejects the role others would demand of her. It is at this moment that the character of Clarissa becomes more than that of a recovered hysteric or party hostess so to speak – she has *actively* avoided being that which she so despises but which society would demand. This mirrors my discussion of the hysteric in which I posited the hysteric as rejecting the submissive role a patriarchal society demanded of her.

It is Woolf's use of literary impressionism which has enabled her to create a character who is more than what her appearance suggests. Through literary impressionism Woolf does more than create depth of character by revealing their thoughts, she has juxtaposed the impressions and observations of a variety of characters so that they are, at any time, both subject and object. This allows Woolf to demonstrate the flaws inherent in Edwardian narration: her multi-layered narration of contradictory perceptions foregrounds what is absent when a single narrative voice provides a singular representation of the narrative world. Clarissa, as the object of Lady Bruton's perspective, is an inadequate wife for her husband's political aspirations. Clarissa, as subject, has the opportunity to present this, not as a flaw in her character, but as a conscious decision rejecting a less than desirable position society would have her occupy. Without the juxtaposition of these contrasting impressions Woolf's narrative would have lacked the ability to examine how the world is seen and experienced, a concern which is integral to much of Woolf's fictional and critical writing.

Clarissa's solitary contemplation, as examined earlier in the chapter, ends when a striking clock reminds her of her party and the duties she must perform as hostess and as friend: "she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally



and Peter. And she came in from the little room.”<sup>490</sup> Woolf follows Clarissa’s sudden realisation with a break in the text – the first to occur in the party scene – after which the narrative returns to Peter and Sally:

“But where is Clarissa?” said Peter. He was sitting on the sofa with Sally. (After all these years he really could not call her “Lady Rosseter”.) “Where’s the woman gone to?” he asked. “Where’s Clarissa?”

Sally supposed, and so did Peter for the matter of that, that there were people of importance, politicians, whom neither of them knew unless by sight in the picture papers, whom Clarissa had to be nice to, had to talk to.<sup>491</sup>

Woolf chooses to reinforce the shift in focalisation through her page layout, the page break functioning in a manner akin to a cut in a film. It is interesting to note how this very literary technique is readily understood through a comparison with a filmic technique and I will consider how Gorris’ film chooses to reflect Woolf’s technique of conveying an abrupt interruption in a character’s chain of thoughts in the following chapter. The page break reflects the distance between Clarissa and the party by having a pause in the text to illustrate the distance between the series of impressions. In contrast to her earlier strategy of leading one impression into the next through the presence of a character, the use of a break creates a sense of distance which reinforces Clarissa’s isolation from the party.

The paragraph following the break opens with Peter’s speech, direct discourse clearly flagging up the shift in focalisation away from Clarissa. The triplicate questioning of Clarissa’s whereabouts again reinforces her distance from Peter, but also reveals his own dependence upon her presence. The scene that follows presents the conversation between Peter and Sally as they discuss their lives since they last met at Bourton and reflect on Clarissa and their time together at Bourton. The conversation is presented through an alternating free indirect discourse of Peter’s and Sally’s impressions of the other, contrasting them as they were in the past with who they are in the present. Peter is shocked by the change in Sally: “the softness of motherhood; its egotism too”; whilst Sally notes how Peter’s nervous habits still remain: “That was his old trick, opening a pocket-knife, thought Sally, always opening and shutting a knife when he got excited.”<sup>492</sup> It is interesting that Sally notes Peter’s nervous tic immediately following the representation of his recollection of the moment he lost Clarissa to Richard Dalloway – it is through the juxtaposition of Peter’s memory and Sally’s impression that the magni-



tude of Peter's loss is illustrated more thoroughly than either impression could muster individually.

The narrative flits between Sally's and Peter's past, moving through memories of their time together at Bourton and significant interludes during their time apart. The temporal disruptions do not create confusion as Woolf has created a carefully structured rejection of narrative linearity. The following quotation demonstrates how Woolf has cleverly interjected direct discourse to separate the alternating focalisation:

He was connected with her youth, and she still had a little Emily Brontë he had given her, and he was to write, surely? In those days he was to write.

"Have you written?" she asked him, spreading her hand, her firm and shapely hand, on her knee in a way he recalled.

"Not a word!" said Peter, and she laughed.

She was still attractive, still a personage, Sally Seton. But who was this Rosseter?<sup>493</sup>

It is interesting that Woolf uses Sally's dialogue as a link to Peter's unspoken consideration of Sally's hands – the question, it emerges retrospectively, is being presented through Peter and not the previous focaliser, Sally. It is striking how Sally's question of unfulfilled ambition makes less of an impression on Peter than his recollections of her in their youth, revealing much of Peter's preoccupation with what was, as opposed to what is. Throughout the representation of the conversation between Sally and Peter elements of direct discourse are interjected into the free indirect discourse. This allows Woolf to present the recipient's impression of the other through their internal, and on occasions external, response. The effect is that the reader continually has to evaluate the scene from one character's perspective and then the other's, much like watching a game of tennis. These subtle disruptions within the focalisation subvert the linearity of the scene and are an important element when considering Gorris' adaptation and its relation to Woolf's style.

Elizabeth Dalloway is observed by Sally to be a "very handsome, very self-possessed young woman", and who, Peter notes, "was not a bit like Clarissa".<sup>494</sup> The sight of Clarissa's daughter inspires Sally to discuss Clarissa with Peter, revealing that she, like Peter, could not accept or understand why Clarissa married Richard. However, before the pair can discuss the marriage further they are distracted as Hugh wanders past, "dim, fat, blind" who "blackened the King's boots or counted bottles at Windsor".<sup>495</sup> The "admirable Hugh" remains a source of mockery for the



pair who ridicule his appearance and character, inferring that his success lay in doing something of little consequence which carried the impression of being of great importance.<sup>496</sup> Their comments critique the society which has spawned the likes of Hugh as one which rewards the obsequious who blindly perform superficial rituals, thus cementing the pair's position as outsiders. Hugh walks past without seeing them, as they are of no consequence, afford no social benefit, and, as such, are as good as not there. The other guests representative of society, Sir William and Lady Bradshaw, are similarly condemned as Peter describes them as "damnable humbugs".<sup>497</sup>

Sally's position beyond the society Hugh represents is presented by Sally whose husband, she reveals to Peter, was "a miner's son" who had made his fortune.<sup>498</sup> Peter, as revealed earlier in the novel, is equally excluded from society, as he has returned from the colonies in India to secure his fiancée a divorce. Both present a shift away from Victorian ideals towards an unpredictable modernity in which alternate relationships and social standings proliferate. Sally reinforces her alliance with Peter when she insists he and his future wife come to visit her — they are united in their rejection of social ideals and norms. By contrast, Sally criticises Clarissa, offended by the lack of response to the numerous invitations for her to visit the Rosseters. Sally determines that "Clarissa was at heart a snob" who believed Sally had married beneath herself.<sup>499</sup> Clarissa, as I explored above, is both firmly situated within society, as epitomised by the Prime-Minister's presence at her party, and yet is beyond it, as her distance from the Bradshaws and Lady Bruton suggests. Neither is she wholly understood by Sally and Peter who have equally problematic relationships with a society they seem to reject and have somehow conformed with, for instance Sally is married and a mother, and Peter has returned to London to secure a future for his current relationship. Just as Sally does not understand Clarissa's motivations for marrying Richard, she may not understand why it is Clarissa has yet to visit and as this is never revealed, the reader is left to formulate their own answer as Woolf's ambivalence refuses to produce one.

The pair catch sight of Clarissa's daughter, Elizabeth, moving towards her father and the focalisation shifts to present the impressions of Richard Dalloway. This shift opens a new paragraph, the first and lengthiest of the novel's final five paragraphs, in which the novel is brought to a close. The paragraph opens with Richard looking upon his daughter with fatherly pride having failed to recognise



her initially in her “lovely pink frock!”<sup>500</sup> Elizabeth joins her father and they watch the rooms empty as the few remaining guests depart:

Even Ellie Henderson was going, nearly last of all, though no-one had spoken to her, but she had wanted to see everything, to tell Edith. And Richard and Elizabeth were rather glad it was over, but Richard was proud of his daughter. And he had not meant to tell her, but he could not help telling her. He had looked at her, he said, and he had wondered, who is that lovely girl? and it was his daughter! That did make her happy. But her poor dog was howling.<sup>501</sup>

It is clear in the above quotation how Woolf produces a multi-layered narration through a series of subtle shifts in focalisation. The quotation opens with Richard as the focaliser before the object of his observation, Ellie, usurps his position. It is worth noting that the movement occurs mid-sentence and the focalisation has returned to Richard at the beginning of the next sentence. Woolf is employing a phrase oft-repeated by Ellie as a means of highlighting the momentary shift in focalisation mid-sentence. In doing so Woolf is able to capture the fleeting and fragmentary nature of life she described in her famous manifesto for “Modern Fiction”.

The following constitute the remaining paragraphs of the novel in which the narrative pace has quickened as direct discourse speedily pushes the narrative to its close:

“Richard has improved. You are right,” said Sally. “I shall go and talk to him. I shall say good-night. What does the brain matter,” said Lady Rosseter, getting up, “compared with the heart?”

“I will come,” said Peter, but he sat on for a moment. What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? He thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?

It is Clarissa, he said.

For there she was.

THE END<sup>502</sup>

I have reproduced the above in its entirety because, once again, Woolf is making some interesting moves in her employment of focalisation and the impressions of characters. First, I would like to draw attention to the dual naming of Sally/Lady Rosseter. The nature of the narration at this moment echoes that of an omniscient narrator providing a coherent presentation of a speaker, their speech and their action. However, Woolf’s inclusion of Sally’s marital identity is interesting as this is not how she is identified during her time at the party. Peter similarly refers to her



only as Sally, except when he is contemplating her current life as wife and mother. I would suggest that the dual naming reflects this, and that Peter Walsh is the focaliser for this paragraph, and the shift from Sally to Lady Rosseter marks his movement out of the past and into the present where he sits with Lady Rosseter, mother and wife, as opposed to free-spirited Sally Seton. The employment of Sally's full title also returns us to her entrance where she is announced as Lady Rosseter, much to the confusion of Clarissa. The title, therefore, reminds the reader of Sally's presence as a party guest and, thus, returns us to Clarissa's present and her role as the hostess.

The following paragraph combines direct discourse and free indirect discourse to reveal and juxtapose Peter's calm exterior with an inner turmoil. The sudden heightened emotion, "terror... ecstasy", is reflected in the rapid delivery of the questions, as suggested by the overlapping sentences. In addition, the short length of the paragraph similarly echoes Peter's brief emotional panic in that it presents a strong contrast to the deliberate contemplation exhibited by Clarissa earlier. The simple structure of the final two paragraphs that follow then suggest Peter regains his composure: they are controlled and to the point with a minimal amount of emotion. Peter answers his own question, revealing through internal monologue the source of the sudden excitement and equally sudden recomposure: Clarissa. The simplicity of the sentence, devoid of emotion and explanation suggests the inability of language to grasp the intensity of the situation. The moment, to return to Lacan, is beyond language, it is something other, an excess, it is *jouissance*.

I have included the use of "THE END" in order to demonstrate the conscious closure of the novel – there can be no question of missing pages, the narrative has clearly been brought to an end. The narrative, one can readily argue, is just beginning for Peter, Sally, and Clarissa who are yet to have the reunion they have desired and that the novel has been moving towards. Clarissa comments to Sally whilst greeting her that she had been thinking of their time together at Bourton, and Peter has similarly been recollecting the same period in their past. Woolf's novel of a single day ends at the very moment when Clarissa's and Peter's day moves out of the past and into the present.<sup>503</sup> Choosing to close the narrative before this move out of their past occurs refuses the closure the novel has been



driven by; the normative fixed ending is replaced by something open to a multitude of options. One would think that having presented a narrative in which the central characters dwell on their past and lost relationships, and another is driven to suicide, the novel would end on a pessimistic note, mourning a past of missed (or rejected) opportunities and a nostalgic pining for lost innocence. However, it is through Peter's focalisation and his excitement, albeit controlled, at the prospect of finally seeing Clarissa that the tone is one of possibility. In choosing to close the narrative before Peter, Sally, and Clarissa have their meeting Woolf creates a hint of what may come, and it is Peter's anticipation of this moment which drives the sense of potential with which the narrative ends. This sense of potential firmly undermines the critical suggestion that Clarissa has chosen a respectable suicide but rather, as Woolf's own commentary suggests, that Clarissa has chosen life over death.

## Conclusion

It is clear that socio-political and cultural climates have an influence upon the range of intertexts which I am exploring as part of the web of intertextuality that contributes to the reading of *Mrs Dalloway* and its adaptations. I have introduced the figure of the hysteric as a critical, yet alternative, intertext influencing Woolf's exploration of an oppressive phallogentric society. I demonstrated how early studies of hysteria, as conducted by Charcot, contributed to the construction of the figure of the hysteric as appropriated, or staged, by a phallogentric society in order to advocate the oppression of the feminine, or the *other*. This non-normative intertext will be returned to in both chapters four and five: in chapter four I will examine how Woolf's representation of Septimus and his hysteria are adapted to film and how stylistic imitation allows Gorris's film to employ aural signifiers in its adaptation of a wholly verbal narration; in chapter five I consider how the figure of the hysteric feeds into an additional alternative intertext, that of the cultural icon, and how it influences the critical reception of Daldry's film adaptation *The Hours* and its representation of Virginia Woolf. This latter point will return to the influence of the socio-political as I explore how this has influenced biographical texts which, in turn, are intertexts for Cunningham's adaptation, specifically cited in the novel's list of sources.



Critically, I argue in chapter five that adaptation has the potential to invite the reader to (re-)engage with the critical and cultural contexts of adaptation, for instance, promoting a cyclical dialogue between critical discourse and adaptation in which one takes us to the other and back again. With a text full of ambiguities such as *Mrs Dalloway*, as I have demonstrated above, the literary criticism will continue to be fluid and ever-changing as suggested by Smith:

While there are some dominant critical tendencies, the 1990s have not brought consensus. The variety of readings this weekend reaffirms that there can be no conclusion, no consensus. As critics, we have agreed to disagree – to generate new readings. We may be in the decade of Clarissa as lesbian, but is it Henke's celebratory lesbianism or Jensen's denied lesbianism?<sup>504</sup>

My discussion of *The Hours* as a "queering" of *Mrs Dalloway* in chapter five highlights how any "reading" may be questioned and how Cunningham's *The Hours*, through its stylistic imitation of Woolf's conscious ambiguities, celebrates the lack of consensus Smith refers to — I demonstrate how his text invites the reader to return to Woolf's novel and its criticism, with a new perspective, asking new questions and interrogating previous readings. An integral component of *Mrs Dalloway* that attracts this critical mutability is Woolf's ambiguous, almost evasive, approach to fiction. Woolf, as I have discussed earlier, opposed the narrative conventions employed by the Materialists, arguing that their linearity and meticulous attention to the material did not convey those "myriad impressions" Woolf saw as being integral to life and fiction. Perhaps then we should view Woolf's uncertain treatment of homosexuality in much the same light, a conscious subversion of the authority and certainty characteristic of Edwardian fiction. It is with Woolf's style of writing in mind, her celebration of experience and ambivalence, and rejection of the fixed and definitive, that I now turn to Marleen Gorris' film adaptation to consider the role of stylistic imitation in the adaptation of novel to film.



# Chapter Four

## Adapting *Mrs Dalloway*: Stylistic Imitation and the Spectre of Woolf.

This chapter is primarily concerned with the issue of stylistic imitation and how it develops an original means of viewing the relationship between source and adaptation, one which marks a return to fidelity whilst moving beyond previous fidelity studies. The focus of this chapter will be Marleen Gorris's 1997 film adaptation *Mrs. Dalloway*, scripted by Eileen Atkins. I will open with a discussion of how, and why, *Mrs Dalloway* has been described as an "unfilmable novel", considering the meaning of such a title and the implications of adapting the seemingly unadaptable. This will lead into a detailed textual analysis of Gorris's film, paying particular attention to how the film develops a rhetorical relationship with the novel through stylistic imitation. I will focus upon the scenes addressed in previous chapters, paying particular attention to the novel's representation of the hysteric. Firstly, I examine the sky-writer scene and address the film's adaptation of the novel's impressionist narration, establishing how the film's multiple signifiers combine to produce a heightened subjectivity and impression-driven narration. Secondly, I turn to Septimus's visit to Dr. Bradshaw and his subsequent suicide to develop my exploration of the adaptation's representation of hysteria which I touch upon during my discussion of the Sky-writer scene. Critically, I demonstrate how the film maintains the novel's thematic exploration of the hysteric and the patriarchal oppression of the *other*. I conclude my film analysis with a close reading of Clarissa's party, paying particular attention to her encounter with the Bradshaws and how the film echoes Woolf's own reading of Septimus and Clarissa as "two sides of the same coin". In focussing this chapter upon stylistic impression I intend to demonstrate its importance to reading the adaptation and, for instance, how it facilitates the discussion of the source text in a manner which reclaims fidelity criticism from its highly problematic iconophobic-logophilic past. In addition, I will draw upon the film's non-visual and non-verbal signifiers in order to



expose the detrimental effect their negation has had on previous readings of *Mrs. Dalloway*. In chapter five I will similarly explore the non-traditional when I explore the more unusual elements of intertextuality as I consider alternative intertexts such as the cultural icon and their role in *The Hours*.

### **“I know a lot of people are Afraid of Virginia Woolf”<sup>505</sup>: Adapting the Unfilmable**

Modernist texts are considered “difficult” to adapt and have frequently been deemed unfilmable, mainly for their emphasis on interiority. *Mrs Dalloway* is one of these texts, featuring in Walter Kendrick’s “On Film: The Unfilmable”, an essay which quotes director Marleen Gorris acknowledging that “Some people thought the book was unfilmable”.<sup>506</sup> In the same essay Eileen Atkins, the film’s scriptwriter, comments on the “fear” associated with adapting the work of Woolf, whilst in his review of Gorris’s film adaptation, Roger Ebert comments that Woolf’s novel is “almost unfilmable”.<sup>507</sup> Christine Geraghty picks up on such sentiments in her 2008 study *Now A Major Motion Picture* entitling the chapter that examines Gorris’s *Mrs Dalloway* “Art Cinema, Authorship, and the Impossible Novel”. But what is it that determines a novel to be unfilmable or impossible? Kendrick does not clarify what it is that constitutes an unfilmable novel, despite complaining of the inadequacy of such ambivalent phrases in other discussions of the film adaptation.<sup>508</sup> His essay, a logophilic comparison of Iain Softley’s “successful” adaptation of James’ *The Wings of the Dove* (1997), with the “failure” of Gorris’s *Mrs Dalloway*, determines the source novels unfilmable because both present “essences” that are “difficult” to “capture”, but this “definition” is as elusive as the source text’s proposed “essence”.<sup>509</sup> His discussion of Gorris’s attempt to adapt the unfilmable is somewhat brief and contradictory; he asserts that “Gorris’s *Mrs Dalloway* ... offers a veritable instruction manual on how to make a poor film that says nothing of interest about the book it’s based on” but this does little to enhance our knowledge of what might constitute an unfilmable source.<sup>510</sup> He criticises Eileen Atkins’s “reverence” to Woolf, and accuses the film of being a mere “homage” intending to “glorify literature”.<sup>511</sup> He continues by adding that “the failure of Gorris and Atkins’s *Mrs Dalloway* doesn’t mean that the novel cannot be filmed”,<sup>512</sup> despite having exclaimed in the previous paragraph that Woolf’s “simple, beautiful prose is beyond the reach of any film, of course”.<sup>513</sup> The adaptability of Woolf’s “beautiful prose” is a question I will return to when I demonstrate the



stylistic relationship Gorris's film develops with its source novel as it adapts the wholly verbal into the verbal, aural, and visual signifiers of film.

Invariably, it is the modernist novels which are deemed unfilmable or impossible to adapt; works by Woolf, James, as above, and Proust are those often cited. Melissa Anderson notes of the latter's *A la recherche du temps perdu*: "Adapting Proust's four-thousand-page grand novel, with its labyrinthine prose, plethora of characters, and multiple shifts in time, poses [a] ... daunting set of challenges to a filmmaker".<sup>514</sup> Examining the question of adapting modernist works provides a greater insight into the question of what it is that constitutes the "unfilmable", or rather what may be perceived as such. In "Modernism and adaptation" Martin Halliwell comments:

when it comes to cinematic adaptations of modernist fiction filmmakers have often found themselves faced with major technical problems. ... First, the commercial pressures on mainstream cinematic production have historically ... demanded slick products that do not challenge viewers, whereas high literary modernism demands scrupulous attention from readers. Second, the interest among modernist writers in unreliable narrators, psychologically complex characters, fragmented perceptions, and mythical allusions are devices that rarely translate smoothly into film without technical complication or dilution of creative intent.<sup>515</sup>

The question of difficulty, Halliwell suggests, has been solved by "the tactic of general avoidance", although the existence of adaptations of the works of Woolf, Lawrence, Hemingway, Joyce and so on implies some are willing to take up the technical challenges outlined above.<sup>516</sup> Halliwell examples Martin Ritt's 1959 adaptation of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, suggesting it simplifies the narrative by "reordering events and editing out the complex psychologically complex sections", avoiding a narration constructed of multiple perspectives "because it makes for a disorienting sequence of events, with very little established material".<sup>517</sup> In the following section I will address the adaptation of "fragmented perceptions", "psychologically complex characters", and multiple perspectives when I examine the adaptation of the Regent's Park scene(s) in *Mrs Dalloway*, bringing into question Halliwell's final comment regarding "technical complication or dilution of creative intent".<sup>518</sup> I will also question Halliwell's criticism of the Gorris adaptation which he accuses of having "struggled to render the interiority of the Woolf's novel" in my close readings of the film.<sup>519</sup>



The perceived “technical difficulties” which frequently emerge in discussions of adapting modernist texts, and therefore unfilmable or impossible (to adapt) novels, returns us to a mode of commentary which, as I discussed in chapter one, is reductive and somewhat outdated. For instance, Halliwell’s discussion of the difficulty of adapting modernist modes of narration such as unreliable narrators and fragmented perspectives, is one “cliché” highlighted by Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation*: “Cliché #1: Only the Telling Mode (Especially in Prose Fiction) Has the Flexibility to Render Both Intimacy and Distance in Point of View”.<sup>520</sup> Hutcheon continues to de-bunk such limited attitudes with her critique of the following “clichés”, all of which come to the fore when considering the adaptation of modernist literature:

Cliché #2: Interiority is the Terrain of the Telling Mode; Exteriority is Best Handled by Showing ...

Cliché #3: The Showing and Interacting Modes Have Only One Tense; The Mode of Telling Alone can Show Relations Among Past, Present, and Future ...

Cliché #4: Only Telling (in Language) Can Do Justice to Such Elements as Ambiguity, Irony, Symbols, Metaphors, Silences, and Absences; These Remain ‘Untranslatable’ in the Showing or Interacting Modes ...<sup>521</sup>

The notion of an unfilmable novel, therefore, is a blighted one which returns us to the limited and reductive treatments of the film adaptation epitomised by iconophobic studies concerned with issues of fidelity. Whilst Halliwell provides a clearer understanding of the unfilmable than Kendrick it is necessary to move beyond his discussion of technical difficulties in order that we do not restrict ourselves to an outdated comparison of texts based upon logophilic prejudices that privilege a novel’s modes of narration over those of film. My discussion of the stylistic relationship between Woolf’s novel and Gorris’s adaptation engages with and exposes the fallacy of the impossibility of transposing novel to film, observing and developing McFarlane’s call for considering adaptation proper and finding filmic equivalences. However, the influence of the notion of the unfilmable upon the film adaptation is worthy of consideration and one which Christine Geraghty approaches in her recent study *Now A Major Motion Picture*.

Geraghty argues that it “is not a question of being difficult to adapt” that determines a source to be unfilmable, for surely any classic novel could be deemed such simply because of its size for instance, rather it is because the source itself is “perceived as difficult” and “beyond the capacity of a shared,



popular culture".<sup>522</sup> The difficulty, it would seem, is founded upon perceptions of accessibility and questions of an established audience. Geraghty, whose interest in these "impossible novels" stems from "how they function as sources for screen adaptations",<sup>523</sup> explains that "screen adaptations of this nature are more likely to be seen as unique events associated with a particular film director rather than another version of a well-loved classic".<sup>524</sup> In addition, Geraghty notes that

because [the source novels] are perceived as being difficult, the critical context takes on a particular resonance. Critics serve to identify an audience for this work and *explain its complications* in a way that is not deemed necessary for a television version of *Pride and Prejudice* or a musical of *Oliver Twist*.<sup>525</sup>

The perceived "complications" mentioned by Halliwell are alluded to here, but it would seem they are part of a critical vernacular rather than an actuality of the adaptation process. This is echoed by Kendrick's commentary on the unfilmable. The role of critical context shifts to take on a much more influential role so that the criticism actively contributes to the construction of textual meaning in a manner that is not seen with other, supposedly less difficult works. This holds particular resonance for *The Hours*, not in terms of explaining the "complicated" relationship with Cunningham's novel, but in terms of two of that novel's intertexts: *Mrs Dalloway* and Virginia Woolf. In chapter five I consider the critical contexts surrounding both intertexts as I first examine the influence of biography and cultural iconicity upon the critical reception of both the novel and film of *The Hours* in relation to their representation of Woolf, and second, the relationship between literary criticism of *Mrs Dalloway* and Cunningham's novel.

Geraghty's discussion of Gorris's adaptation "focuses on the cinematic culture" that surrounds the adaptation, rather than the adaptation itself, specifically how authorship functions "as a feature of the modernist adaptation".<sup>526</sup> The consideration of cinematic culture is a critical move on Geraghty's part, and one which ties back to my own theory of a web of intertextuality, in which the source novel is but one of a number of intertexts. The cinematic culture Geraghty discusses includes the generic contexts and critical contexts I discussed in my examination of the influence of docu-drama conventions upon the *Ten Great Writers* adaptation of *Mrs Dalloway* discussed in chapter one. Geraghty examines the general influence of art cinema upon adaptations of so-called impossible or unfilmable novels, before considering how the generic conventions of heritage cin-



ema, Gorris's previous films, the critical reception and the presence of the actress Vanessa Redgrave function within the "cinematic culture" surrounding Gorris's *Mrs Dalloway*.

Geraghty, drawing heavily upon the work of David Bordwell, identifies the following key features of art cinema: a narrative "marked by chance and coincidence" as opposed to the "purposeful, deadline-driven stories of Hollywood"; the prominence of "psychological realism" and "a commitment to subjective verisimilitude"; a self-reflexivity which produces a self-conscious mode of narration which often "resists, defers, and undermines our understanding of what is being presented as the story"; and, finally, "an ambiguity that underpins the apparent contradictions of an approach that combines realism with the stylization of overt narration".<sup>527</sup> These features, Geraghty argues, foreground the presence of an author and as such, position the director as "a key selling point and a critical means of explaining such films".<sup>528</sup> Thus:

In the case of the modernist adaptation, the context of the art film and the reputation of the source set up potential clashes that relate to the relationship between word and image, the accessibility of modernist art, and the relationship between author and auteur.<sup>529</sup>

The adaptation of modernist novels, therefore, becomes something more than just the transposition of novel to film. These "impossible" adaptations foreground their status as adaptations, encouraging a discourse which examines the relationship between source and adaptation and recognises the multiple intertexts operating, such as the presence of a female/feminist director. The adaptation of modernist literature, it would seem, far from being impossible is something which forces us to recognise the multiple intertextual relationships that contribute to the adaptation and that we, as readers and consumers of adapted and adapting texts, bring to our own experience of the film adaptation. This study, like Geraghty, explores the presence of the author and the impact that has on the adaptation, but in contrast to Geraghty I utilise the author's presence as a means of developing the adaptation's relationship to its source, something Geraghty consciously excluded from her study of adaptation. The presence of the author in adaptation is quite literal in *The Hours* as Cunningham dedicates one of his three narrative strands to Virginia Woolf and, in chapter five, I consider how Cunningham develops his rhetorical relationship with *Mrs Dalloway* by featuring other Woolf-authored texts as inter-



texts. This illustrates how my theory of adaptation merges previously opposed approaches.

It is the interaction between the presence of Gorris as author and the generic conventions of heritage cinema that is of interest to Geraghty who questions "how the layering of authorship and genres" can function alongside the film's "critical context" in the construction of the film's meaning.<sup>530</sup> She first explores how Gorris functions within the film's critical reception, arguing that Gorris's "reputation as a woman artist reinforces and is deemed appropriate for an adaptation of a work by another woman artist, Woolf".<sup>531</sup> Gorris's reputation was established with films such as *A Question of Silence* (1982) and *Antonia's Line* (1995) which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language in 1996.<sup>532</sup> Geraghty then turns to consider those elements of the film that draw upon the conventions of heritage cinema, before focussing her analysis on those elements of *Mrs Dalloway* which connect the film to both Gorris's earlier work and the heritage genre, namely the centrality of the feminine and feminine relationships.

*Mrs Dalloway* employs selected conventions of the heritage genre, such as a "fascination with costume and sets", to produce "a nostalgic evocation of a gracious way of upper-middle class life" which in turn confirms the audience's "own superior understanding of the social problems of the day".<sup>533</sup> Geraghty turns to the representation of Clarissa's past: "The story of Clarissa's girlhood deploys the characteristic iconography of the genre" which is then "presented as episodes in a lost but perfect time".<sup>534</sup> This loss is foregrounded through a stylistic contrast between the representation of Clarissa's past and her present: "while in the 1890s sequence the visual pleasure of setting and costume tends to outweigh their narrative purpose, in the 1920s story they are delicately fixed into the story".<sup>535</sup> The stylistic juxtaposition highlights the nostalgia with which the past is viewed within the narrative, through the eyes of Clarissa and Peter for instance. It is the film's representation of Clarissa's and Sally's friendship at Bourton that, for Geraghty, marks the merging of the conventions with heritage cinema and Gorris's position as auteur. The representation of feminine intimacy is a concern of Gorris's previous films and *Mrs Dalloway*, although less overtly, similarly explores the relationship(s) between women. The concern is maintained in the film's present, where Clarissa's relationships with a range of woman such as Lady Bruton, Lady Bradshaw, and her daugh-



ter, Elizabeth are explored. The merging of authorship and genre is similarly noted by Claire Monk in a review of the film for *Sight and Sound*:

Gorris is not a director who plays by the usual rules. *Mrs Dalloway*'s art-film appearances ... harbour a robustly female-centred sensibility; but a conventional period aesthetic also coexists with a ruthless unsentimentality and political bite which few recent British period films have fully achieved.<sup>536</sup>

Geraghty goes on to examine how the film's critics demonstrated an inability to look beyond the film's employment of generic convention as it reduced the film to a pale imitation of a Merchant-Ivory production.<sup>537</sup> Leslie Hankins, to whom I shall return later, adopts a similar mantle in her damning comment: "Marleen Gorris' *Mrs Dalloway* is marketed less as a social critique than as a Merchant Ivory love story about courtship, chaste kisses, lost youth, old houses and dinner parties."<sup>538</sup> Such a criticism negates one half of Woolf's study of "sanity and insanity", ignoring Septimus Warren Smith and his experience at the hands of "Proportion and Conversion", Sir William Bradshaw, something this study corrects. In chapter five I return to the inability of the critic to see beyond elements such as costume and setting resurfaces as I explore how the critical reception of Daldry's *The Hours* struggled to see beyond the film's "beautification" of Woolf and her suicide, focusing its commentary on biographical inaccuracy which prettified the tidal river in which she drowned. Significantly Geraghty, like myself, introduces another element of the adaptation's intertextuality that enables the "sympathetic" critic to move beyond the film as an inferior imitation of a Merchant-Ivory production.<sup>539</sup> Geraghty notes how some critics turned to the figure of actress Vanessa Redgrave to give the film credence, arguing that, variously, her "physical resemblance to Woolf", her affiliation with the institution of British Theatre and the quality of her acting promoted a "willingness to accept Redgrave's performance as the equivalent of Woolf's prose".<sup>540</sup> Geraghty develops her discussion of Redgrave in a manner akin to my own discussion of Atkins in chapter one: one which returns us to the icon, or public persona as an intertext. She argues that Redgrave's off-screen persona as "a feminist and political activist" links her, and thus the film, "to a rather different Woolf, the author of *A Room of One's Own*, and gave Mrs Dalloway's thoughts and actions a more political slant".<sup>541</sup> Adding that "Three female figures, Woolf, Gorris, and Redgrave, are brought together by



*Mrs Dalloway* and are used in different ways to create the criteria by which the film can be judged".<sup>542</sup>

For Geraghty the introduction of a third figure provided a means "of explaining the interaction between authorship and genre", a move which I echo through some of the key tenets of this thesis. It is necessary to conceive of adaptation in terms of the multiple, intertextual relationships that contribute: the central relationship between source and adaptation; the influence of criticism; or something other, and far less "textual", like the presence of icons or figures, such as an author's or actor's public persona(e) or a cultural construction such as the figure of the hysteric, which bring with them various political associations. For now I wish to return to the intertext which has a special relationship with the adaptation, that of the source novel. In the following section I will explore the special relationship between the two as outlined in the first chapter, focussing on stylistic imitation and the transposition of the novel's wholly verbal signifiers into the verbal, aural, and visual signifying system of film. In doing so I will demonstrate new ways in which the relationship between the source and the adaptation can be examined without returning to the reductive attitudes exhibited by reviewers such as Kendrick.

### **Smokey Impressions**

Of those critics who dismissed Gorris's film as a "failure" many have too readily concluded that the film "struggled to render the interiority of Woolf's novel".<sup>543</sup> Such dismissals of the film have cited the film's skywriter scene, focussing upon its visual depiction of the skywriter, frequently deriding its depiction of the skywriter's message, arguing that such explicit representation undermines the elusive nature of Woolf's impressionistic scene. I wish to move beyond such reductive treatments to consider how the juxtaposition of the skywriter with the impressions it generates produces a stylistic relationship between novel and film. One key element of this study is how stylistic imitation contributes to the relationship between source and adaptation and how it develops the critical discourse surrounding adaptation by reclaiming fidelity from its prejudiced past in which film was always accused of inferiority. In this section I will focus on the skywriter scene which, as I explored in chapter two, is impression-driven in the novel as the scene unfolds through the eyes of multiple peripheral characters, the focalisation



passing fluidly from Mrs Coates and Mr Bowley, to the shell-shocked Septimus Smith. The scene, I argued, functioned in opposition to the writing of the Materialists as it favoured fragmentation over linearity, the trivial over the grand, and a fleeting focalisation over a dominating authorial narration. It is my intention to consider how these concerns are adapted to film. First, I am going to produce a reading of the film's use of its visual signifiers to present something more than a simple, detrimental commentary on the shots depicting the skywriter and its message; and second, I will explore how other, often negated, non-visual signifiers develop the stylistic relationship between novel and film.

The film's editing is the first element that imitates Woolf's collective impressions: shot/reverse-shot sequences represent the moment the aeroplane impresses itself upon a variety of characters including, initially, Clarissa Dalloway. The film first introduces the aeroplane aurally as the sound of its engines accompanies a long shot of Clarissa who, in turn, glances upwards. Once Clarissa is seen to locate the source of the noise there is a cut to the aeroplane flying overhead, thus, the film can be seen to echo the novel's narration which similarly presented the impressions of the engine's noise before revealing its source. The shot of the aeroplane is followed by an extreme long-shot of Clarissa strolling through the park, passing a succession of peripheral characters each looking upwards in search of the aeroplane whose engines continue to be heard. Such a shot, with its repetition of gesture, produces a relationship between the strangers just as Woolf's scene, which in O'Connor's words, employed "intersubjective mediation" of a common object to create a "sense of collective togetherness".<sup>544</sup> Arguably, the film foregrounds this "intersubjective mediation" by representing the collective act of observation as well as the expression of the shared impressions, thus bringing to the fore one theme from Woolf's novel.

The film then cuts to a shot of the aeroplane moving vertically from the bottom to the top of the frame leaving a line of smoke. It is not until Rezia's perspective, presented a few shots later, that the aeroplane's skywriting is revealed more fully, as a shot/reverse shot shows Rezia observing the skywriter as it writes two letter E's alongside a K and R. The scene, whilst presenting more explicitly than the novel the skywriter and its message, replicates the novel's rejection of a single, authorial narrator in favour of a succession of focalisers: it is through Clarissa's eyes we first encounter the aeroplane, but it is not until Rezia becomes the focaliser that we see it in action, and it is through another focaliser, an un-



named nanny, that the whole word, as opposed to individual letters, is revealed as she mutters aloud "Kreemo. It says Kreemo", followed by a shot of the skywriter completing the letter O. The skywriter's message is initially presented not by the film's visual representation of it, but aurally, through a character's vocalisation of the message. The nanny, like Mrs Coates and Mr Bowley in the novel, is a peripheral character whose impressions contribute to the representation of the scene as film and novel alike rely on the multiple impressions of both peripheral and central characters to represent the scene. It is also worth noting that the skywriter's message is yet to be seen in its entirety, until a later conversation between an unknown elderly lady and a businessman reveal the second half of the message to be "Toffee". The scene then, in delaying the representation of the whole in favour of presenting a series of impressions, echoes the novel's representation of fleeting characters experiencing fleeting moments rather than the singular, whole presentations Woolf rejected.

The scene reinforces its relationship with the novel through its soundtrack, an element which employs alternate signifiers, neither visual nor verbal, in its stylistic imitation of Woolf's impressionism and one which is neglected by those critics who determine the film to be a failure. The opening shot sequence, as examined above, is accompanied by a scored soundtrack whose light, flighty melody is suggestive of Clarissa's own carefree mood. The actor's performance presents a similar impression of the character's mood suggesting that the soundtrack is a subjective one, reflecting Clarissa's impressions. The music, subsumed by the increasing volume of the aeroplane engines, vanishes from the scene as Clarissa is similarly absented. The simultaneous departure of the extradiegetic musical soundtrack and Clarissa from the scene further points to the former being an aural signifier of the scene's focalisation, operating in addition to the film's more conventional shot-reverse-shot sequences. Significantly, the subsequent absence of an extradiegetic musical score does not result in the loss of the aural signifiers' relation to focalisation. The volume of the aeroplane's engines increases as the musical score disappears all whilst the aeroplane vertically traverses the frame, leaving a smoke trail. When the aeroplane exits the top of frame it disappears both visually and aurally, as the sound of its engines also vanishes. The editing of the aural signifiers coincides with a visual cut to a close-up shot of three pigeons clamouring for crumbs at a person's feet, as the aeroplane's engines are replaced with the pigeons' cooing and other birds twittering in the background. The intradiegetic



soundtrack, therefore, much like the extradiegetic one, is intrinsically tied into focalisation, which, in this instance, is similarly associated with the impression and how the world impresses itself.

The impressionistic nature of the intradiegetic soundtrack is illustrated from the moment the aeroplane disappears through to its reappearance. The close-up shot of the pigeons cuts to a medium shot of Septimus and Rezia Warren Smith sitting on a park bench with pigeons at their feet. Septimus, engrossed by the pigeons below, reaches for a paper and pen from his jacket whilst his wife huffs at his behaviour before glancing upwards. Thus, it is Septimus's feet in the prior shot and he can now be attributed with the focalisation which resulted in the earlier absence of the aeroplane's engines. Septimus's behaviour indicates he is oblivious to his surroundings and therefore unaware of the aeroplane overhead. He is engrossed in observing the birds at his feet; his gestures are imitative of the pigeon's behaviour and, as he nods and cocks his head in response to their cooing, he is visually aligned with the birds, arguably engaging with them. The aeroplane has not left the narrative, rather, it does not make an impression upon Septimus whose experience of the world in that moment is of the pigeons, and nothing else. The absence of the aeroplane, both aurally and visually, not only suggests he is entirely focused on the birds, but it also puts him at odds with the other characters who are all seen to be caught up in observing the aeroplane. This introduces Septimus's position as other, as being at odds with the world he inhabits; something which is presented further as the Regent's Park scene continues with its increasingly impressionistic intradiegetic soundtrack.

It is when Rezia attempts to draw Septimus's attention to the aeroplane that the soundtrack becomes increasingly subjective, more a soundtrack of impressions. After Rezia glances upwards the aeroplane's engines become audible, initially returning as a faint hum before increasing in volume as Rezia exclaims to Septimus "Look!" The aeroplane reinserts itself onto the soundtrack as its presence is felt by the character(s) on screen. The sound of cooing pigeons remains, even as the scene visually cuts to the aeroplane and its partially scribed message, with the volume of both aeroplane and pigeons beginning to increase further. Rezia's dialogue bridges the visual cut from her and Septimus to the aeroplane whose message we see being written: the first two letters, K and R, are complete, followed by two incomplete Es. Interestingly, the visual signifiers reinforce the sense that the scene is structured around the impression and furthers the film's stylistic relation-



ship with Woolf's novel. Notably the smoke-word is not yet fully formed and the shot is composed in a manner that echoes Woolf's rejection of an omniscient narration in favour of a more fragmented narration produced by literary impressionism. The letters cross the frame diagonally; the letter K is situated to the left of the frame, about half way up but the remaining letters move progressively towards the top of the frame, with the final partial E barely contained within the top right-hand corner. This off-centre composition implies an absence of premeditation which, when coupled with the shot/reverse shot editing, suggests an intradiegetic and homodiegetic focaliser experiencing the moment as it happens — there is no room within the shot for the final, as yet unwritten, two letters of the word, therefore suggesting a lack of knowledge of what the message may yet become. Rather it is an impression of a fleeting moment being fleetingly captured in the present. My analysis foregrounds how, as in Woolf's writing, a moment is observed, how impressions are formed and impress themselves within an instant.

The scene cuts back to a close-up of Rezia looking upwards, before returning her gaze to Septimus, to whom the film cuts as he exclaims to himself, and the pigeons: "There is no crime". This close-up is followed by a return to the close-up of Rezia whose smile vanishes from her face as Septimus's words impress upon her, disrupting her momentary happiness. The aeroplane again disappears from the soundtrack during the close-up shot of Septimus, returning once the camera cuts back to Rezia, suggesting that Septimus remains oblivious to her and the aeroplane overhead. The camera returns again to the close-up of Septimus who has become increasingly animated, stating "There is no death. The birds they sing it in Greek!" whilst shaking his head in excitement. The intradiegetic noises of the aeroplane and the pigeons increase in volume, intensifying the intradiegetic soundtrack. A sudden explosion fires, followed by a rapid cut to a medium shot of Septimus and Rezia; Septimus clearly startled, looks anxiously over his shoulder whilst Rezia sits nonchalantly, if not a little fed up, oblivious to the sudden aural commotion impressing itself on her husband. The soundtrack continues to crescendo, becoming increasingly disorientating as it is layered with the sounds of a crying baby, the sound of feet and wheels crushing gravel, and a variety of exploding shells and gunfire reminiscent of the soundtrack accompanying the film's opening shots of Septimus in the trenches. The confusing noises are accompanied by a series of fairly rapid edits cutting between the couple, the pigeons, a long shot of a war veteran seated on a park bench in uniform with a crutch and an am-



putated right arm, a close up of a crying baby in a pram, and a long shot of a nanny pushing a pram along the gravelled path. Throughout the sequence the volume of the various sounds continues to increase, as does Septimus's already anxious behaviour, thus implying that the soundtrack we are privy to is that which Septimus is experiencing. It is once he returns to face forwards and pronounce to himself: "The whole world is clamouring, kill yourself, kill yourself" that the intradiegetic soundtrack calms just as Rezia leaves her husband's side unnoticed as Septimus is steadfastly focused on his scribbles, suggesting a shift in focalisation as it no longer exclusively represents the world as experienced by Septimus.

The soundtrack during this sequence, therefore, becomes increasingly subjective, first reflecting how the aeroplane impresses itself upon the focaliser as it moves from being a faint hum, little more than background noise, to dominating the intradiegetic soundtrack, becoming the sole focus. Second, it conveys the impressions of Septimus's shell-shock as sounds from the war are inserted alongside the everyday in a sequence which turns a morning in the park into something as horrifying as trench warfare. The former echoes the novel's use of a common object to unite numerous characters despite spatial and temporal distance. The latter is character specific and functions to indicate Septimus's position, segregated from society. Rezia is part of the "intersubjective meditation" of the skywriter and yet, despite their physical proximity Septimus does not share her experience. Rezia is similarly excluded from Septimus's aural impressions, further foregrounding Septimus's isolation from the world he inhabits. The film is employing both visual and aural conventions in its adaptation of Woolf's wholly verbal impressionism, and it is through Septimus's focalisation that the degree of the filmic impressionism becomes apparent as the impressions of an hysteric's hallucinations are made as "real" as the everyday.

The impressionistic soundtrack, then, establishes Septimus as a character who is at odds with the world he inhabits; it is he, and he alone, who experiences the aural cacophony which layers the sounds of the everyday to produce an overbearing, oppressive experience. The scene reveals that Septimus's mental discomfort is the result of shell-shock: the sounds of exploding shells gesture towards Septimus's experience of trench-warfare as depicted in the opening scene of the film which presented Septimus's experience of losing his comrade, Evans, to a shell explosion. Evans himself is not directly depicted in this earlier scene, which opens with a long shot of Septimus, looking directly into camera, crying out to



Evans not to come. This then cuts to a shot of an explosion before cutting back to Septimus whose face, having just witnessed his friend's death, suddenly becomes expressionless. It is the aural presence of the shells accompanying Septimus's anxiety in the park that suggests a merging of past and present. Septimus hears the past which is juxtaposed with the image of the war veteran, who is very much of the present, albeit a reminder of the not-so-distant past. This echoes Woolf's representation of Septimus during the Regent's Park scene of the novel which similarly featured the presence of an amputee war veteran.

The insertion of the past into the present is made all the more apparent in a later scene depicting Septimus's hallucination in Regent's Park: Septimus "sees" Evans walking towards him dressed in a dirty, worn soldier's uniform whilst Septimus screams at him not to come, his face contorted with horror as Evans then disappears behind an explosion of mud and smoke. The film visually represents the hallucination as it is experienced by Septimus, whereas previously it had relied on aural signifiers alone. It is interesting that this very hysterical moment is presented using the most normative of techniques such as the use of the classical shot-reverse shot sequence to determine Septimus's point of view. The scene adopts a more conventional method of representation in its adaptation of the hallucination, thus moving the hysteric and their hysteria into a conventional order of representation. In addition, this scene serves to illustrate conventional attitudes towards adaptation as the visualisation of the written word. For Claire Monk, the film's representation of the traumas of the First World War presents a further disruption to film convention: the past is no longer permitted to be viewed with nostalgia as hysteria, amputee war veterans and suicide are brought to the fore through their juxtaposition with the lavish party Clarissa hosts.<sup>545</sup> The film's stylistic imitation of Woolf's literary impression reinforces the horrors of the war as the soundtrack impresses upon the viewer the oppressive and inescapable horrors traumatising Septimus Smith.

The skywriter sequence thus juxtaposes a conventional point-of-view of the present with a soundtrack that draws from different temporal and spatial locations to create a highly subjective representation which echoes Woolf's rejection of conventional narrative time and space in favour of a literary impressionism that follows its characters' mental meanderings across temporal and spatial divides. In contrast to the flashback which this film employs elsewhere the impressionistic soundtrack and conventional point-of-view shot/reverse-shot invites the audience



to experience the disorientating juxtaposition in a manner akin to Septimus's own hysterical experience. It creates a focalisation that draws upon visual and aural signifiers not only to represent how Septimus sees the world but to impress that experience onto the audience and heighten their empathy.

## **Septimus & Clarissa: Hysterical Allies**

The novel, as I noted in chapter three, situates Septimus and Clarissa as "two sides of the same coin", a relationship utilised by Woolf in her acute representation of the oppressive nature of the patriarchal society they inhabit, as personified by the physician Sir William Bradshaw. Gorris's film introduces the relationship between Septimus and Clarissa in its opening scenes, as Clarissa witnesses Septimus's response to the car back-firing in the street through the florist's window. The scene imitates the novel's focus on the trivial as Clarissa is consumed not by the car, or its potentially significant passenger, but by Septimus's face. Clarissa moves closer to the window drawn almost hypnotically to Septimus who stands, looking in, rooted to the spot. It is only when the florist curses the motor-car that Clarissa is snapped out of the all-consuming impression of the unknown man's face. The film introduces a moment where the two characters meet, a moment it then returns to in order to develop the relationship between the pair — this is not an act of transference, but a new scene designed to portray the relationship between the otherwise unconnected characters of Clarissa and Septimus. For instance, Septimus's horror-filled face returns to haunt Clarissa when she retires to her room having returned from her morning walk to fetch the flowers. In voice-over, accompanying a shot of Clarissa's hand placing her hat on her bed, Clarissa quotes the Shakespeare quotation that Woolf employed to unite Clarissa and Septimus in the novel: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun." The film simultaneously adopts and reinforces the novel's use of the quotation to unite the two characters by having it immediately follow Septimus's appearance. The adaptation proper functions alongside transference to forge the connection between Clarissa and Septimus, specifically the hysteric's influence upon her, introducing a direct connection between the hysteric and Clarissa.



In the novel both Clarissa and Septimus experience the sounds of the car back-firing, but neither sees the other, there is no connection beyond that which O'Connor termed the "intersubjective meditation" of the same object. The film foregrounds the link between the characters by having Septimus make a direct impression on Clarissa. Interestingly, in the original shooting script the directions dictate a subtle visual link between the moment Septimus himself haunts Clarissa and the moment his suicide haunts her by having them occur at the same window: "She moves to the window, the same one in which she earlier saw the face of Septimus" from which Clarissa then "looks down at the spikes of the railings of her own house".<sup>546</sup> The film does not actually retain this little detail, thus maintaining the anonymity of the suicide which foregrounds the novel's theme exploring the significance of the impression and the connections between strangers. The anonymity allows the film to convey the importance of the impression that is central to Woolf's experiments: in "The Unwritten Novel" it does not matter that the narrator fails to accurately imagine the life of the lady opposite, but rather how she inspires such fantastic impressions. The film makes changes in its adaptation of the source novel in order to mirror the novel's wholly verbal impressionism. It is apparent that changes do not altogether necessitate a reduction in the relationship between novel and film, rather by making changes to, for example, narrative events, it can develop a stylistic relationship which is far more fruitful and interesting than a simple transference of narrative from one medium to another.

I am now going to develop my earlier discussion of the adaptation's use of both aural and visual signifiers by considering how the film imitates the novel's rejection of patriarchal institutions, such as war and the medical establishment. In the novel Woolf frequently employed a subjective third person narration in which free indirect discourse represented the multiple impressions and conveyed character — Woolf's stylistic rejection of the Materialist literary conventions meant that rather than instructing the reader as to who the characters are and what their social status may be, she lets their voices colour the narration, using their impressions to represent the world and portray character. I turn now to Septimus's relationship with the doctors Holmes and Bradshaw, paying particularly attention to the scenes involving Bradshaw's diagnosis of Septimus's condition, followed by a close reading of the film's presentation of Septimus's suicide. This will then lead into a discussion of Clarissa and the impressions made upon her by the Bradshaws who bring death to her party. Within this I will be considering how the film devel-



ops the relationship between Clarissa and Septimus through their mutual disregard of the Bradshaws and Clarissa's contemplation of Septimus's suicide.

### **Septimus at Harley Street**

In the novel, the scene of Septimus's visit to Harley Street is dominated by Sir William's voice, through whom the recounted narrative of Septimus's hysteria is focalised as Septimus's voice is all but excluded from the scene. Septimus is also removed from the discussion of his hysteria, literally as Bradshaw and Rezia retire to another room, where Bradshaw talks to Rezia about "proportion" and the legalities of Septimus's situation: "He had threatened to kill himself. There was no alternative. It was a question of law."<sup>547</sup> The scene concludes with their return to Septimus whereupon Bradshaw instructs the couple that he will make the necessary arrangements and contact them that evening, Septimus again being ignored as he tries to communicate his anguish. The film immediately reflects the novel's representation of Septimus's exclusion from his own diagnosis as Septimus is, again, spatially excluded: the scene opens with Rezia and Bradshaw discussing Septimus's condition and his treatment to date at the hands of Dr. Holmes, whose notes Bradshaw summarises in his discussion with Rezia, whilst Septimus waits in the corridor outside. The film echoes the novel's conscious reduction of Septimus's hysterical narrative as Bradshaw evaluates Septimus's case primarily on the information provided by Holmes — it is Holmes's notes and not Rezia's (and later Septimus's) words which are privileged by Bradshaw, who both vocalises them and repeatedly returns to them in his diagnostic meeting with the Warren-Smiths; the physician speaking the words of another physician and ignoring those of the hysteric who sits silently outside.

The film not only represents the physician's tendency to ignore or disregard the hysterical voice, it replicates the novel's representation of this phallocentric silencing, juxtaposing the voice of physician with that of the hysteric. Initially this is evident in how Bradshaw receives Rezia's account of Septimus's treatment. Rezia explains to Bradshaw that her landlady sent for her doctor, Holmes, after Rezia expressed concern for Septimus, at which point the physician indifferently interjects the highly reductive statement: "He threatened to kill himself." Bradshaw's dismissive attitude reappears in his response to Rezia, "He didn't mean it", to which Bradshaw laughingly replies, "No", before the smile is dropped and he



disdainfully concludes with "Of course not." Bradshaw's behaviour, his physical gestures and his speech, suggests he has little empathy or understanding for the desperate woman in front of him. His half-hearted chuckle at Rezia's plight exemplifies his inability to relate to the patient and their family; at best, he is attempting to appease any awkwardness, at worst, he is laughing at her. The moment is quickly replaced by a sense of exacerbation as the physician's facial expression and intonation demonstrate his belief of Rezia's inferiority — she is as much a recipient of his "Proportion" and arrogant superiority as Septimus. Bradshaw's attitude is further exemplified as Rezia discusses Septimus's recent degeneration, detailing symptoms such as Septimus's "talking to the dead man, Evans", and introducing Septimus's hysterical confession of having committed "some terrible crime". Bradshaw leans forward, resting his arms on the desk, and looks intently at Rezia, occasionally cocking his head to one side to convey sympathy and understanding. Bradshaw is simply (re)producing an acute performance of a series of well-rehearsed and "appropriate" responses. Rezia continues by describing the moments when Septimus returns to his old self, such as a trip to Hampton Court on top of a bus of which she exclaims, with a smile, "he was funny as he used to be and he made me laugh and I was so happy". Bradshaw once again (re)produces the appropriate responses, a smile and a slight chuckle as he relaxes back into his chair. A close-up of Bradshaw exposes the insincerity of the performance, revealing a momentary slip during which the smile vanishes and the face conveys a sense of boredom as the physician masks a yawn, his mouth tight and his eyes somewhat glazed.

Once Rezia concludes her speech, detailing Septimus's exclamation that he should kill himself, there is a pause. The camera lingers on Rezia for a moment before cutting to Bradshaw who, having determined Rezia has concluded her narrative, leans forward to make some notes before informing Rezia of his diagnosis with yet another, well-rehearsed performance. Bradshaw clearly and precisely outlines to Rezia his diagnosis in a deliberate and marked delivery, emphasising the seriousness of the condition through the tone and speed of his speech:

Bradshaw: "Mrs Warren-Smith, your husband is very seriously ill. From everything you have told me and from Dr. Holmes' report I believe he is suffering from delayed shell-shock."

Rezia: "He's not mad, is he?"

Bradshaw: "Oh, I never use that word. I prefer to say: [looks upwards and smiles] 'Lacking a sense of Proportion.'"



This performance returns us to the impression Woolf created of Bradshaw as a public-speaker and echoes Woolf's characterisation of Bradshaw, his insincerity and sadistic pleasure in the situation illustrated as he smirks when Rezia introduces the word "mad". Bradshaw's worshipping "Proportion, divine proportion, Sir William's goddess",<sup>548</sup> is presented through the smile that adorns his face as he introduces the issue of Proportion — he looks upwards in the seconds before speaking of it, arrested in a moment of idolatrous pleasure. Bradshaw then explains to Rezia how people such as Septimus need to get "Complete rest" and must be taken away "from their loved ones, for their own good". The camera focuses solely on Rezia, who is shocked into silent submission during Bradshaw's comments, lingering on her defeated silence before cutting away to scenes of Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway arriving at Lady Bruton's for lunch. Significantly, the casting of Robert Hardy heightens the performance as his screen persona brings to the role an air of authority and aloof, upper-middle class Britishness expected of the physician Woolf portrayed in her novel. Hardy, a stalwart of the British acting profession, was recently cast as Cornelius Fudge in the *Harry Potter* films, a character who similarly represents an antiquated and oppressive society, and is well known for his roles in a number of heritage films including *Sense and Sensibility* (1995).

Following the Lady Bruton lunch scene, the film returns to the Warren-Smiths with Bradshaw opening the door to his office, calling to an uneasy Septimus: "Will you come in now, please." Bradshaw opens the conversation by commenting upon Septimus's having "served with great distinction in the war", to which Septimus first responds with mockery, "The European War — that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder?", before rejecting the distinction afforded him by claiming to have "forgotten" it. This immediate reaction returns us to Showalter who discussed shell shock as a rejection of the masculine ideal of war: Septimus is clearly refuting and undermining the Great War by referring to it as little more than schoolboy games and he further discredits society by negating the honours it bestowed upon him. The schoolboy reference may, also, be read as a commentary on the age of many of those who went to war — the minimum age for conscription was eighteen, yet boys much younger queued to enlist. Septimus is both mocking the war as well as alluding to the numerous underage and inexperienced soldiers. Bradshaw looks on, momentarily frowning before raising his



eyebrows in bemusement as Septimus's admission of memory loss affords the physician the luxury of ascribing such sentiments as being symptomatic of the illness, thus providing the opportunity to reappropriate, and restage, Septimus's rejection of the masculine ideals and criticism of a society as nothing other than the ramblings of a madman.

The camera returns to a medium-long shot of Septimus and Rezia sitting side by side as Septimus discusses his failure in the war and his "crimes", with Rezia countering: "He has done nothing wrong whatsoever." The pair address only Bradshaw, when they each speak they look directly into the camera, which has been demarcated as Bradshaw's perspective through conventional shot/reverse-shot editing. The shot composition also reinforces that it is Bradshaw's focalisation through which we are seeing the scene: first, it is not a symmetrical shot of the pair, Rezia is partially out of frame which crops her left side whereas Septimus is fully in shot, a comfortable distance from the edge of the frame. Whilst Rezia remains of interest to Bradshaw, Septimus is given marginal priority as Bradshaw takes the opportunity to observe him directly. A shot of Bradshaw follows in which he addresses Septimus, Bradshaw's eyeline situates Septimus off centre, but the angle is insufficient to suggest it is Rezia's point of view, nor the perspective of the pair. It is Bradshaw who is the primary focaliser at this moment imitating the scene's presentation in the novel in which Woolf uses rhetoric laced with medical discourse to pinpoint Bradshaw's focalisation. It is to Bradshaw that Rezia directs her corrective statements, for it is he alone whose judgement of Septimus has any authority, as his presence as sole focaliser infers. Septimus's own self-criticisms, like Rezia's earlier discussion, do not carry any weight during this scene other than to further condemn him in the eyes of Bradshaw.

The scene then continues with individual medium close-up shots of the three characters as Septimus discusses the "damn fool" Holmes and how human nature has condemned him to death. Whilst Bradshaw exhibits a low opinion of Holmes' treatment (when reviewing Holmes' prescribing Bromide he shakes his head dismissively) he demonstrates a stronger dislike of Septimus's attitude towards Holmes, "[t]he repulsive brute with the blood-red nostrils", whose recommendation of porridge for breakfast Septimus mocks. During Septimus's rant against Holmes, Bradshaw and Rezia both attempt to conceal their shock, even exchanging brief glances. However, Rezia's evident concern distances her from Bradshaw as her shock is clearly an expression of fear — she understands that



Septimus's ravings can only compound the situation. Whilst the former shot composition aligned Septimus and Rezia against Bradshaw, this shift to individual shots of the trio has divided the Warren-Smiths, suggesting that Septimus's hysteria has divided the couple. Rezia's behaviour does not align her with Bradshaw and, equally, the sudden shot division distances her from Septimus, the emphasis here being upon the hysterical barrier between the couple. Rezia's relationship with her husband is not what she would have it be, as suggested by earlier shots during the Regent's Park scene in which Rezia's longing for a child is apparent) and her earlier comments to Bradshaw that her husband is not the man he was when they married.

During his meeting with Bradshaw Septimus not only vocalises his disgust at the First World War and medicine's General Practitioner but he also dismisses the gender normatives demanded by society. The ideal of masculinity, as Showalter noted in *The Female Malady*, demanded the suppression of emotion and the soldiers of the Great War were expected to conceal their responses to the horrors and tragedies of trench warfare. Septimus's crime, the "sin for which human nature has condemned me to death", is his inability to feel: "I did not care when Evans was killed; that was the worst." Septimus's tragedy is a socio-political one, he is being punished for fulfilling the socio-political ideal — he is an honoured soldier, society has deemed he "served with great distinction", but this award has a bite, the criteria for garnering such a distinguished record having produced psychological damage. And as such, he must rest, in one of Bradshaw's homes where he will regain a sense of Proportion, or, in other words, learn how to (re)produce the appropriate performance of masculinity, such as that propagated by Bradshaw and Holmes.

It is during Septimus's discussion of his crimes that an extradiegetic, musical accompaniment emerges, commencing the instant Septimus mentions the word "sin" during his declaration that "nothing whatsoever is the matter, [pause] except the sin [pause] for which human nature has condemned me to death". The first comment is delivered almost mockingly by Septimus before he pauses to recompose himself. At the moment "sin" is spoken there is a subtle introduction of the extradiegetic soundtrack as a solo cello produces a single-noted crescendo before quietening as Septimus leans forwards to address Bradshaw and speak of his condemnation, his inability to feel. A mournful melody is then introduced: the



cello is initially unaccompanied before other strings are added, and whilst Septimus “confesses” his crime, a piano emerges repeating a short and discordant motif which subtly jars with the strings’ melody, suggestive of Septimus’s emotional discomfort. Septimus becomes increasingly distressed as he discusses his crime, and as his behaviour becomes increasingly hysterical so the scored extradiegetic soundtrack intensifies as more layers are added; the piano, for instance, introduces three chords as opposed to simply three single notes, and more strings are introduced to the mournful melody. The extradiegetic soundtrack here, as in the scene depicting Septimus’s suicide, is revelatory of Septimus’s experience of the moment, of how the loss of Evans has impressed itself upon him. Thus, the extradiegetic soundtrack forges a relationship between the film and the novel’s verbal impression — it is an aural imitation of the impressions generated by the novel’s wholly verbal style. The score is foregrounded as belonging solely to Septimus as the music disappears the moment Bradshaw silences him with his reductive, off-the-cuff comment: “We all have our moments of depression.” Septimus, realising he has no ally in Bradshaw, sits back in his seat with an odd, disgruntled smirk.

The removal of the extradiegetic score foreshadows the medical practitioner’s silencing of the hysteric in the closing moments of the Warren-Smiths’ meeting with Bradshaw. Bradshaw turns exclusively to Rezia to ask about Septimus’s symptoms, his “impulses”. Septimus interjects, “That is my own affair” to which Bradshaw retorts, “No, there you are mistaken, sir. We are all responsible for one another”, a comment which tickles Septimus on whom the irony is not wasted: he, therefore the hysteric, is thus responsible for Holmes, the physician. Bradshaw, however, is not entertained and rolls his eyes at Septimus’s witty response. The sequence is edited to reinforce Bradshaw’s domination of Septimus: Bradshaw is depicted in a medium shot looking slightly to the right of the frame asking about Septimus’s impulses; cut to a medium shot of Rezia, mouth ajar, looking quite overwhelmed whilst in voice-over we hear Septimus’s protestations which visibly exacerbate Rezia’s momentary impotency; cut to a medium shot of Septimus frantically mopping his brow with a handkerchief as, in voice-over, Bradshaw contradicts him. The composition of each shot affords an almost identical framing of the three characters, however, the editing of the intradiegetic soundtrack and the actors’ gestures undermines this balance as Bradshaw, visually, is the only character to display self-control — Rezia is clearly at a loss, she is literally dumbstruck, whilst Septimus is physically dishevelled in a shot in which Bradshaw’s controlled



voice dominates the character in frame. This then cuts to the shot used earlier of Septimus and Rezia side-by-side, suggesting that the mutual degree of discomfort imposed by Bradshaw has united the pair.

The scene continues with Bradshaw explaining to Septimus that “we have been arranging for you to go into a home” to which Septimus again mocks, in a somewhat camp manner: “One of Holmes’ homes?” The humour is, again, lost on Bradshaw who proceeds with the business of correcting Septimus: “no, one of *my* homes, Mr Warren-Smith. And there we will teach you to rest and to regain a sense of Proportion.” Rezia’s remonstrations fall upon deaf ears as Bradshaw turns to “the Law” to outmanoeuvre and silence her so he can hasten the couple out of his office: “Your husband has threatened to kill himself. There is no alternative. It is a question of the law.” Bradshaw calls the appointment to an end by standing to his feet and asserting “I will arrange everything”, instructing Rezia that all she need do is be ready for between five and six that evening. Bradshaw’s instructions are delivered in voice-over whilst the camera focuses first upon an overwhelmed Rezia and then a defeated Septimus, both in close-up. The camera then cuts to a long shot of all three, Bradshaw drawing Rezia to her feet whilst proclaiming, again, “It is the law, Mrs Warren-Smith”. Bradshaw stands between Rezia and Septimus, the latter remaining seated, hunched over in defeat, as Bradshaw’s shadow subsumes him. Septimus is literally and metaphorically cast into darkness by the domineering physician who ignores the vulnerable patient to his right. The couple leave the office feeling “deserted”.<sup>549</sup>

### **Septimus’s Suicide**

In the scenes leading up to Septimus’s suicide we see the “lost” husband that Rezia referred to in her discussion with Bradshaw as the pair laugh and joke about the hat she is making for Mrs Filmer’s daughter. Their mood is disrupted as the clock chimes five o’clock and the door bell simultaneously rings, but it is “only the evening newspaper” Rezia informs a visibly panicked Septimus. The distress generated by the impending threat of Holmes and Bradshaw is clear and Rezia does her best to comfort her husband. Septimus calls for his “writings” and Rezia produces a wallet which includes a small notebook initialled “SWS”, page after page filled with tiny writing, and numerous leaves of paper through which Rezia flicks. The pages produce a fleeting representation of Septimus’s impressions



as splintered images featuring astrological figures, sketches of soldiers and pencil and ink drawings violently depicting the explosions and destruction of trench warfare flash past the camera. The images capture Septimus's preoccupation with the world he inhabits, the planetary images echoing his struggle to comprehend the universe, while the images of soldiers and explosions foreground how trench warfare haunts his consciousness. In a moment the film has produced a fragmented glimpse into Septimus's hysteria, a visual imitation of Woolf's literary impressionism.

Rezia tells Septimus "they can't separate us against our will"; her determined expression of allegiance calms Septimus who glances upon his wife serenely and lovingly. In this moment he is not deserted; she is his "sanctuary" and her fearlessness in the face of Holmes and Bradshaw is her triumph, and united in a moment of tenderness, they kiss. But this moment is soon lost as the doorbell rings, followed by the voice of Holmes, announcing his arrival. Septimus's face reflects the sudden threat to him and Rezia, and she darts off to protect her husband, declaring "I won't let him come in here." Septimus is, once again, deserted; Rezia moves off-camera as Holmes' voice continues to be heard; the door slams and Septimus is thrust into despair and the impressionist, musical score commences. Perceptibly panicky and nervous, Septimus's inner turmoil is further represented by the highly discordant extradiegetic soundtrack. The music is multi-layered in a series of clashing minor keys, generating an aural conflict as each instrumental layer grates with the others. The music provides an aural accompaniment to the actor's performance as both unite to produce an acute illustration of a desperate mind reaching out in all directions at once in search of a solution, a way out of the dilemma that has been thrust upon it. The extradiegetic soundtrack, as in previous scenes, is highly subjective. Becoming something more than an accompaniment, it functions as musical impression of the character's emotional turmoil. One may even go so far as to argue that it functions as a non-verbal expression of the hysteria, the music being most obviously subjective during Septimus's hysterical crises.

Septimus glances desperately around the room, fiddling with his fingers, his eyes darting here and there as his mouth twitches, his head almost unconsciously nodding as if in agreement with someone. The gestures create the outward appearance of someone in conversation with themselves and are reminiscent of the involuntary spasms and twitches exhibited by Augustine and other fa-



mous hysterics. The twitches ease and Septimus, having come to a conclusion as suggested by a short but sharp exhale of breath, starts to look about himself as if in search of something. A sequence of shot-reverse shots follows which convey Septimus's perspective as he first considers a pair of Rezia's scissors, then the gas fire, before settling on an open window. The musical score sheds its multi-layered discord as Septimus glances from one object to another, the various string and woodwind instruments being gradually absented, leaving a solo piano once the window is located and considered. The music is a stylistic imitation of the impressions racing through Septimus's panicked mind, representing the emotional despair of a desperate man, which determines the source of his fear not as death but the situation he finds himself in. Septimus is visibly calmer having seen the window; his face is no longer contorted in fear and desperation, rather it settles into fixed determination as he takes a deep breath before moving purposefully to the window, opening it, and climbing out onto the sill. The piano reflects this as it produces a simple, almost childlike melody and the soundtrack loses its sense of oppressive, almost claustrophobic, discordancy as generated by the conflicting instruments. The visual and the aural combine to reflect Septimus's inner calm having resolved to take his own life — his final act of protest and his only means of escaping the tyranny of Holmes and Bradshaw.

In the novel we are informed of Septimus's thoughts as he prepares to jump from the window-sill: "He did not want to die. Life was good."<sup>550</sup> The film finds both visual and aural signifiers to express Septimus's impressions at the moment, for instance he sits calmly watching the world below, even casting a friendly smile to an onlooker at a window opposite, his manner reminiscent of a child sitting on a wall or a river bank watching the world go by with an innocent yet intense curiosity. The soundtrack supports this mood through the piano's child-like melody noted above. The film is moving beyond the conventional transfer of the novel's interior monologue to voice-over, rather it adapts the verbal into the non-verbal, conveying Septimus's experience through the actor's performance and the extradiegetic musical soundtrack. By doing so the film is able to imitate the impressionist style of Woolf's novel and present the hysteric's impressions in a less conventional form of narration, one which, in this instance, reinforces the hysteric's rejection of language and the Symbolic. In a 'Making of' feature the actor Rupert Graves, who plays Septimus, describes Woolf's writing as "phenomenal", determining "her emotional imagery [to be] astonishing". One can perceive in his performance an



interpretation, or imitation even, of this emotional imagery as he conveys through gesture and facial expression the sentiments conveyed through the verbal signifiers of the novel.

In the novel Septimus refers to the suicide as “the melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out”, describing his suicide as “their [Holmes’ and Bradshaw’s] sense of tragedy, not his or Rezia’s”.<sup>551</sup> His comments, as I noted in the previous chapter, return us to phallocentrism’s “staging” of the hysteric, as theorised by Irigaray. The film develops this reading as its presentation of the suicide is far from melodramatic — just as the novel presents the hysteric’s death through the hysteric’s own eyes, and not the phallocentric staging, so does the film. The film similarly hints at and refuses phallocentrism’s re-appropriation, its staging, as Holmes exclaims, off-screen, “The coward!” and then, almost inaudibly, “Why the devil did he do it?”: positioning Holmes off-screen during his exclamations allows the film’s narration to demonstrate the re-appropriation without upholding it, thus imitating the novel’s defiant style of narration. Septimus defies their oppression, he defies their understanding — from their world of Proportion they cannot understand, and significantly, as the diminished volume of Holmes rhetorical question suggests, understanding is inconsequential. The music helps define Septimus’s internal mood and, subsequently, foregrounds the heroism, and not the tragedy, of the scene.

The film, significantly, presents the scene in a manner which privileges the hysteric and the hysteric’s somatic communication, over the physician and phallocentrism as the verbal is forced to concede to the non-verbal, and nor, as is often supposed, is this exclusively limited to the film’s visual signifiers. During the moments before Septimus’s death Rezia’s off-screen struggle with Holmes can be heard, however, it does not dominate the soundtrack but rather vies for attention alongside the extradiegetic score. Following Holmes’ initial appearance, at which Rezia darts off-screen to intercept him, the doctor’s voice is not heard again until after Septimus has moved to the window, when barely perceptible mutterings clarify into an audible conversation, suggesting Holmes’ increasing proximity to the Septimus. Holmes is clearest when exclaiming to Rezia “My dear lady, it is the law”, a threat which fails to register on Septimus’s face as he takes pleasure in observing the world go by. Holmes is rarely on-screen when speaking and in keeping him off-screen; by having him literally speak over the action the scene subverts phallocentrism’s tendency to speak over the silent/silenced hysteric. The



scene further subverts the power dynamic as it shifts the hysteric to the fore: first, it is the visual and aural signifiers representing Septimus's impressions which dominate the scene and, second, Holmes's language of "the law" is unable to influence the scene; it is held at the periphery, off-screen where Holmes can only watch impotently as Septimus commits suicide.<sup>552</sup> This scene is driven not by the verbal, or the phallogentric, but by gesture and the language of the hysteric. And, as if to reinforce this rejection of phallogentric and normative, verbal discourse, the scene closes on Rezia's silent, agonised response to Septimus's death in a medium close-up, the only moment in the narrative's present to be shot in slow-motion giving emphasis to the hysteric's ally over his enemy.

### **Death at the Party: Clarissa and the Bradshaws**

Clarissa's encounter with the Bradshaws and the subsequent impact of Septimus's death upon her was a central proponent of the novel's critical examination of an oppressive phallogentric society and it is one which is equally central to the film. It is through the juxtaposition of Clarissa and Lady Bradshaw that Clarissa's rejection of "Proportion" is first apparent. The pair present a visual and aural contrast, representing the differences between a woman who rejects proportion and one who has embraced it. Both ladies are of a tall and slim build, however, Clarissa is softer in appearance than Lady Bradshaw, who appears more sharp and polished. Clarissa has fair hair loosely tied back with a simple black comb whilst Lady Bradshaw has her dark hair pinned back, a little more crisp in style than Clarissa's, accessorised with a black and silver band with a large black and white feather protruding vertically from the top. Lady Bradshaw's small, penetrating dark eyes are framed by sharply arched eyebrows, whilst her thin lips and controlled expression generate a cold, uninviting demeanour. Clarissa, on the other hand, has big blue eyes and her features are more softly defined than Lady Bradshaw. Clarissa wears a pair of delicate gold earrings whilst, in contrast, Lady Bradshaw sports large, diamond shaped silver earrings. The overall image is suggestive of a woman who is presenting herself in a meticulous and controlled manner with which to flaunt her husband's (monetary) success. The image evokes the novel's description of her as being dressed "in grey and silver, balancing like a sea-lion at the edge of its tank, barking for invitations, Duchesses, the typical successful man's wife".<sup>553</sup> Clarissa, in comparison, is someone who is a little less rigid and a



little less sharply drawn than the well-groomed, well-proportioned physician's wife.

This visual juxtaposition is reinforced aurally as Clarissa's soft, velvety tone is dominated by the loud clipped delivery of Lady Bradshaw's — again, evoking the novel's image of the barking sea-lion. Interestingly, in the novel Lady Bradshaw is portrayed as being a product of Bradshaw's sense of Proportion and a perfect accessory for the physician, whose silver and grey appearance co-ordinates perfectly with his "low, powerful, grey motor" and his own desired image of "sober suavity".<sup>554</sup> In the film Lady Bradshaw barely opens her mouth when speaking which conveys the impression that it is not her words that are being spoken, her almost expressionless face furthers the suggestion that she is little more than a ventriloquist's dummy and the words being spoken are those of her puppet-master husband.

The oppressive, domineering nature of Lady Bradshaw is further brought to the fore when Septimus's suicide is announced. Clarissa is literally silenced by the Bradshaws' announcement of Septimus's death and her face, a picture of horror and confusion, is contrasted with the calm, somewhat smug, veneer presented by Lady Bradshaw. Clarissa is increasingly disturbed as the Bradshaws continue with their tale, it is as if every word they speak assaults her very being. The punctuated manner in which Lady Bradshaw delivers her performance creates the sense that she is striking Clarissa aurally, every word is delivered with a punch that visibly affect Clarissa. This is highlighted with Clarissa's comment, in voice-over, that "she is like a sea-lion. Barking at me". The analogy of the sea-lion, drawn from the novel, presents the image of an animal that sits proudly, barking loudly and proudly at all and sundry, but for who knows what. The sea-lion returns us to the idea of Sir William as a controlling force in his wife's life, with this image turning us to a circus ring-master snapping his whip to make the sea-lion bark or catch a ball on demand. Sir William is commanding the ideal performance of proportion from his wife. The film, like the novel, juxtaposes the two women and portrays Clarissa's particular dislike of this "typical successful man's wife" from whom she shortly flees. Therefore, representing Clarissa's rejection of the role society demands she perform, the role Lady Bruton would have had her fill.

When Lady Bradshaw discusses her husband and his reaction to Septimus's suicide the film, again imitating the novel, acutely undermines the Bradshaws' well-rehearsed appropriation of the hysteric. Lady Bradshaw comments in a con-



trived, wistful performance: "Dear William. He does so hate losing a patient". Lady Bradshaw's head tilts upwards as she relates her husband's hatred of losing a patient, mirroring Sir William's heavenward glance during his appointment with Septimus. The film then cuts to Sir William, the leading man whose performance Lady Bradshaw imitates, addressing Richard Dalloway, who remains off-screen, as he lectures him on shell-shock. The shot is framed so that Sir William's head is cropped just above his eyebrows and his chin is barely contained within as the shot cuts him off abruptly above the top of his collar. There is no room in the shot for anyone or anything other than Sir William's lecture which compromises the proportions of a conventional close-up. This framing thus generates the impression that Sir William is a bombarding, oppressive didact who dominates those around him.

The film's editing suggests that the focaliser, and therefore the person being bombarded by Sir William's words, is Clarissa: a medium close-up of Clarissa cuts to Lady Bradshaw discussing her husband followed by a cut to Sir William before cutting back to Clarissa, over which we continue to hear Sir William's voice. A disturbed Clarissa, in voice-over, suddenly cries "Stop it. Stop it", but her words do not altogether obliterate Sir William's voice from the soundtrack. Clarissa is focussed upon the physician whose lecturing dominates the soundtrack, foregrounding that he is the object of her subsequent pleading despite his visual absence. Clarissa's internal dialogue continues, demanding he stop talking of death at her party and exclaiming "I don't like you. I have never liked you. You are obscurely evil". The camera cuts back to Bradshaw, who is still deeply engrossed in his own diatribe, zooming in to focus on his eyes: cold, unseeing eyes that impress upon the observer that this is a person who does not actually see the patients he treats, such as the "young man" whose shell-shock and suicide he is discussing. Bradshaw and his sense of proportion, therefore, do not see anything other than yet another person to be converted to his ideal, oblivious to the silent cries of the party's hostess.

To maintain the image of Bradshaw the bully the camera cuts back to the extreme close-up of Bradshaw's eyes, his voice still booming. The voice of Lady Bradshaw intrudes, bemoaning the inconvenience of her son's case of the mumps, and it cuts to an extreme close-up of her lower face, the camera zooming in ever closer to her narrow, unsmiling mouth. The camera then cuts between the eyes of Bradshaw, his wife's mouth and an increasingly exacerbated and overwhelmed



Clarissa as the intradiegetic soundtrack is claustrophobically layered with the conflicting voices of the Bradshaws and the string quartet playing in the background. As with the Regent's Park scene, the intradiegetic soundtrack is carefully edited to convey the aural impressions of the scene's focaliser; in this instance it is Clarissa. Clarissa is so overwhelmed, as evidenced by the confusing soundtrack and fragmented visuals, that she cannot conclude a sentence excusing herself from the overbearing conversation. It is her husband Richard who subtly rescues her by drawing Lady Bradshaw into his conversation with her husband, away from a bewildered Clarissa who eventually removes herself to a side room. Clarissa, like Septimus, is silenced by Bradshaw, or rather she is stunned into silence by him and his wife. Richard rescues his wife, affording her the luxury of a moment's seclusion to contemplate Septimus's suicide.<sup>555</sup>

Clarissa, like the hysteric, is forced to express her rejection of the physician and his law silently. However, the film, like the novel, refuses to silence the hysteric, giving Clarissa the means to vocalise her anxieties. The film employs voice-over to not only convey Clarissa's distress, but her explicit rejection of Bradshaw and his appropriation of Septimus's hysteria. In voice-over Clarissa presents an alternative story of Bradshaw and his patient: "A young man came to you on the edge of insanity and you forced his soul – made his life intolerable and he killed himself". Voiceover, as a filmic device, presents Clarissa's thoughts and critique of the oppressive social system, thus giving voice to the "unspeakable". The film employs a conventional device to give voice to the Other and undermine the normative social conventions of the diegetic world, much as the hallucination scene presented the experiences of the hysteric. Significantly, Clarissa's impressions are represented in voice-over because unlike her hysterical counterpart, Septimus, she has not fully rejected the Symbolic. The film has adapted Woolf's impressions in two different means to reflect the characters' position within (or rather without) society — Septimus has fully rejected it, thus his impressions are presented in a non-verbal mode of narration whereas Clarissa is not fully outside the Symbolic so her impressions are presented verbally, yet outside of the Bradshaws' access.

In her article "'Colour Burning on a Framework of Steel': Virginia Woolf, Marleen Gorris, Eileen Atkins, and *Mrs Dalloway*(s)" Leslie Hankins criticises Gorris's film's "cinematic conventionality" arguing that the film fails "to exploit the potential of the purely cinematic for the film adaptation of Woolf's experimental



fiction" and "lacks the aesthetic richness of her visionary novel".<sup>556</sup> Clearly the film's use of the voiceover to express the novel's social criticism disputes Hankins's limited examination of the film adaptation. Hankins bemoans the absence of the novel's "juxtaposition between the unspoken and the spoken" but the film continuously juxtaposes the visual with the aural, and perhaps nowhere more than with the character of Clarissa whose voiceovers frequently reveal a thought contrary to her outward appearance.<sup>557</sup> In contrast, Geoffery Macnab compliments the film's use of the voiceover, his comments echoing my own reading of the stylistic relationship between the novel and the film : "Bad film-makers too often resort to voiceovers where they are unable to convey a story in images and dialogue. Here, the voiceovers are used in a fluid, impressionistic way which complements the elaborately structured narrative".<sup>558</sup> In failing to see beyond the use of conventional devices and consider how the conventions are employed Hankins is failing to read just one of the film's many ways of developing a stylistic relationship with Woolf's novel.

Just as Woolf subverted the narrative conventions of the Materialists to expose and critic society, so to does Gorris's film adaptation. For instance, elsewhere Hankins argues that the

novel's lush, poetic, strongly visceral depictions of Clarissa's ecstatic memories and the anguish and excess of Septimus's shell-shocked hallucinations beg to be put on experimental film ... But all this is eliminated from Gorris's film which stays on the surface, determined, it would seem, to enter the visionary world of the characters as little as possible.<sup>559</sup>

However, Hankins is neglecting the film's employment of its soundtrack and the aural cacophony of the Regent's Park scene which not only revealed the hysterical impressions and experiences of Septimus, but juxtaposed them with those of the other park-goers. In a bid to augment her argument Hankins relates Eileen Atkins's similar dismay, expressed in a telephone interview with Hankins, "that the film did not follow her suggestions in the screenplay and use cinematic devices to portray visionary moments such as the birds singing in Greek".<sup>560</sup> But, as my own reading highlights, the film employs aural and visual signifiers to convey the impressions of the characters, thus using its wholly filmic devices to imitate the impressionistic writing of the novel and privilege the *experience* over the event itself. The scene, as I argued, impresses the viewer with the same claustrophobic experience as Septimus whilst simultaneously foregrounding his position outside soci-



ety. An experience subsequently mirrored by Clarissa Dalloway who shares Septimus's dislike of the physician Sir William Bradshaw.

Hankins produces an equally limited reading of the film's adaptation of the novel's ideology, arguing that the film suppresses both Woolf's social critique and coded exploration of homosexuality. Once again, Hankins is failing to look beyond the surface, somewhat ironically considering she accuses the film of remaining on the surface. Pouncing on the film's opening scene, and unsurprisingly one which is an example of *adaptation proper*, she condemns its representation of Septimus in the trenches of World War One, arguing that the scene "undermines the design of Woolf's feminist insight, dramatically reversing her gendered 'difference of view'" by privileging the masculine (war) over the feminine, despite the absence of warfare from the scene.<sup>561</sup> Hankins draws upon Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, arguing that, opening with war undermines the feminist politics of *Mrs Dalloway*, which situated "struggle in everyday sites: the doctor's office in Harley Street, shops, public parks, ... Bloomsbury boarding houses", and the dining and drawing rooms across London.<sup>562</sup> However, the opening scene is not representing the normative images of war, rather it presents the experience of the horrors of war — the very thing Woolf's novel is celebrated for. In opening with Septimus's *impressions* of an unknown trauma occurring off-screen the film is establishing one of its, and the novel's, key concerns: the on-going presence of war in a society that desperately tries to forget or ignore the traumatic effects it had on its returning heroes. The viewer has been visually and aurally primed for the haunting presence of the war, as well as the context of Septimus's hysteria, which Monk argued disrupts any nostalgic readings of Gorris's *Mrs Dalloway*.

Similarly, the film represents the novel's critique of society, as Macnab comments: "Gorris exposes the oppressiveness and snobbery of society life" as the film illustrates how there "is something grotesque about the politicians and society matrons who carry on their social rounds, seemingly oblivious to the war they have just lived through".<sup>563</sup> This grotesque nature of society is acutely depicted in the film's characterisation of the Bradshaws — society figures whose success is dependent on the very thing society seeks to ignore, or rather conceal and suppress. Hankins negates to comment on the film's juxtaposition of society figures such as the Bradshaws and Lady Bruton with Clarissa, and in doing so fails to see the film's social critique, as I discussed above. I have demonstrated how the film,



contrary to Hankins' reading, develops both an aesthetic and ideological relationship with its source, employing stylistic imitation to convey the novel's central themes and concerns, as well as demonstrating a broader relationship with Woolf's theories of writing fiction. In doing so I have foregrounded the value of the source novel to the study of adaptation and highlighted the importance of stylistic imitation in considering the special relationship between source and adaptation. Many of the valuable points overlooked by critics such as Hankins failed to address a stylistic relationship which produced critical oversights such as those mentioned above. In chapter five I shall consider how stylistic imitation provides an equally invaluable means of discussing *The Hours*, specifically its fictionalisation of Woolf's suicide. For instance, it provides the means to look beyond biographical accuracy to consider how the scene in both Cunningham's novel and Daldry's film developed a stylistic relationship with Woolf's writing in a strand of the narrative which would, otherwise, not have been perceived as being an adaptation.



# Chapter Five

## *The Hours:* Adapting Mrs Woolf, Mrs Brown and Mrs Dalloway

### Virginia Woolf: Icon(s)

*In brief, she is a phenomenon — icon, celebrity, star.*<sup>564</sup>

Woolf's cultural iconicity is an increasingly prominent feature within Woolf Studies and is the subject of a detailed study by Brenda R. Silver in *Virginia Woolf Icon*. Silver traces the multiple presentations of Woolf with particular focus upon those that associate her with fear. She argues that "versioning is a way of reiterating as well as repositioning the icon(s) known as Woolf. The significance of Woolf's iconicity to contemporary studies of Woolf and her work is foregrounded by the inclusion of a quotation from Silver's study in the introduction to the recent *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies* (2007), a series which provides "introductions to and overviews of key debates" which "seek to map the future direction of the field."<sup>565</sup> Anna Snaith, who edited the collection, opens her introduction with an overview of critical debates addressed in the collection, including essays on narratological, psychoanalytical, biographical, feminist and lesbian approaches to Woolf and her writing. It is interesting that, over and above discussions of Woolf's novels, essays and autobiographical writings, Snaith opens this most recent of critical guides to "Woolf Studies" with Woolf's iconicity, explaining that:

Virginia Woolf haunts our culture. Images of Woolf, particularly the 1902 Beresford photograph, resurface in unexpected places, redolent with meaning. She has become a ready signifier of highbrow modernism, bohemian London, 1970's feminism, elitism, aestheticism, madness, and the drive to suicide.<sup>566</sup>



It is this all-influential figure, or rather figures considering the many facets constructing the Woolf icon, that introduces another “text” to consider when addressing *The Hours* as adaptation much like the figure of the hysteric I discussed in chapter three. The cultural icon, whether Woolf or the figure of the hysteric (and the two are intertwined), is both as influential as and functions akin to those more normative intertexts such as anterior literary texts. It is pertinent, therefore, to look beyond the conventional text, as I shall demonstrate below, and toward those alternative texts which are equally influential upon the construction of textual meaning. It is important to consider how the cultural iconicity of Woolf functions within the adaptation and, notably, how *The Hours* becomes a site where the different and, often conflicting, elements of Woolf’s iconicity are brought into discourse with one another.

In the introduction to her study Silver discusses the numerous, and often conflicting, Virginia Woolf icons:

Occurring across the cultural terrain, whether in academic discourses, the intellectual media, or mass/popular culture, the proliferation of Virginia Woolfs has transformed the writer into a powerful and powerfully contested cultural icon, whose name, face, and authority are persistently claimed or disclaimed in debates about art, politics, sexuality, gender, class, the ‘canon’, fashion, feminism, race, and anger. The debates themselves are varied, and they have generated often radically conflicting versions of ‘Virginia Woolf’, who must be understood in this context as an image or representation, under erasure, between quotation marks.<sup>567</sup>

Silver’s study traces the evolution of Woolf’s iconicity, examining how each particular Woolf icon is influenced by the context from which it is born and how each icon is under continual review. The Woolf icon(s), both Snaith and Silver note, are not intrinsically linked to her writings as, Silver argues, exposure to the Woolf icon(s) more often than not precedes any experience of her written works. Woolf, then, is not immediately recognised as an author, but, variously and simultaneously, as a feminist, an hysteric, a suicide and/or a snob. However, the Woolf icon(s) may, and often do, influence how Woolf’s writing is read (as well as the fiction influencing how her icons are perceived — as illustrated by Cunningham’s anecdotal discussion of an early belief he held that Woolf lived in a lighthouse) and it is in *The Hours* that we can see how Woolf’s icon(s) become part of the intertextual web that constructs textual meaning and influences its reading.



Silver divides her study into three parts, each section examining how Woolf is constructed by different elements of culture. The first section entitled “Negative Encounters” considers how Woolf is regarded by what Silver terms the “intellectual media” and the academic curriculum, and she considers how Woolf functions as a locus for the “battle of the brows” and the precarious position of feminism within the academy and those who comment on it.<sup>568</sup> The second section, “Starring Virginia Woolf”, considers Woolf’s presence in American and British culture, tracing “Virginia Woolf’s career as ‘star’ of theater, cinema, television and fashion, not to mention poster-girl and product endorser”.<sup>569</sup> This section is divided into a series of takes through which Silver explores the construction of Woolf’s star persona from her appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1937, of which Silver argues:

To the extent, then, that Virginia Woolf’s appearance on *Time*’s cover signifies her arrival as star in the United States, it establishes a persona that becomes the basis of her future roles and sets the stage for the battles fought over her meaning.<sup>570</sup>

Subsequent “takes” consider the publication of *A Writer’s Diary* and Bell’s biography; the former, she notes, “can be seen as an attempt to limit Virginia Woolf’s public persona to that of writer or literary figure”.<sup>571</sup> Silver notes how Woolf became a household name in the 1960’s as a result of Edward Albee’s play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and its film adaptation, noting that her fame was “in conjunction with Albee’s work, not her own”.<sup>572</sup> The play highlights a central concern of Silver’s study, the association of Woolf with fear:

for whatever else people may have taken away from the play or film, and however they interpreted the term ‘Virginia Woolf’, her name became synonymous with the power to elicit fear and wreak psychological death or destruction.<sup>573</sup>

The “cameo” appearance of Woolf in the film *Tom & Viv* (1994) is an instance of this fear-inducing facet to the Woolf icon(s) as she simply snarls savagely and unsympathetically at the suffering Viv Elliott. Of the association between Woolf and fear that had entered the cultural consciousness following Albee’s play Silver concludes:

For once Albee had made Virginia Woolf a part of the popular, once she had become a household term whose naturalized, descriptive meaning was inseparable from fear, she became subject to articula-



tions and rearticulations that not only track the ups and downs of feminism, but indicate the power of popular representations to shape cultural meanings.<sup>574</sup>

Silver argues that versioning, the construction of the multiple and often contradictory versions of the Woolf icon, functions to both reiterate and reposition Woolf, to uphold or undermine whatever it is her icon is an agent of, such as feminism. Silver concludes that “Virginia Woolf icon and star [is] a multiple, intertextual proliferation of always partial images, acts, and words”.<sup>575</sup> The proliferation of images, Silver demonstrates, combine to transform “Virginia Woolf – writer, intellectual, feminist, *and* beautiful woman – into an emblem of deadly female power”,<sup>576</sup> which is then undermined by the manner in which Woolf, as Monroe, Silver argues, is “defined by [her] perceived vulnerability, fragility, sickness, and madness”.<sup>577</sup> The association of the feminine with fragility, sickness, and madness is, as we have seen in my discussion of the figure of the hysteric, is a method employed to undermine the subversive threat the feminine represents for phallocentrism, so it does not come as a surprise that Woolf, a leading feminist writer and highly influential woman, would be so readily reduced to her madness. Silver’s study exposes the influence of cultural anxieties have on the construction of the Woolf icon(s). In addition, the Virginia Woolf icon, this “multifaceted iconic figure”, is controlled by a number of different groups, each of whom engage in “custody battles over who gets to define her meaning”, or rather, whose version is authentic, and whose is not.<sup>578</sup>

The third section of Silver’s study, “Doubled Movements”, examines how issues of authenticity are interwoven with role(s) of the Woolf icon(s) in the “exposure and rectification of ideological and cultural contradictions”.<sup>579</sup> Of particular interest is Silver’s examination of various stage and screen adaptations of Woolf’s writings that emerged in the 1990s, including Sally Potter’s *Orlando* (1992) and the stage and television adaptations of *A Room of One’s Own* starring Eileen Atkins (TV 1991), each presenting a new, authentic version of Woolf. The adaptations engaged with contemporary “debates about feminism, gender, sexuality, and androgyny” and were thus perceived as (re)situating Woolf in a political climate that was not contemporary to her writing. Criticism of the adaptations, Silver notes, tended to raise “the question of what the *authentic* Virginia Woolf for that generation would be”, or, in other words what would Woolf had written or said had she been alive.<sup>580</sup> The notion of authenticity is pertinent when examining *The*



*Hours*: Cunningham arguably “authenticates” his text by including a list of source texts, including biographies by Hermione Lee and Quentin Bell, and Woolf’s various autobiographical writings. In addition, as I shall discuss shortly, the issue of authenticity garners rather more attention in the criticism of Daldry’s film adaptation than in the novel’s criticism: Lee, for instance, in her review openly expresses disdain for the film’s representation of Woolf, which she determines is “more of an irritant” than in the novel.<sup>581</sup> Woolf, like her writing, is adapted, “refashioned”, or “(re)versioned”; for each generation, as each adaptation of her work “become ‘originals’ whose construction and performance set the stage for assertions about Virginia Woolf”, especially, as Silver notes, as “many people today see the film or television versions of Woolf’s works before they experience (if they ever do) the versions she wrote and published”.<sup>582</sup>

### **Writer. Intellect. Feminist. Snob. Hysteric. Suicide. Claiming/Disclaiming Woolf**

*“[A] dotty upper-middle-class woman who walked into a river and wrote about Lighthouses in Cornwall”* Stephen Frears.<sup>583</sup>

*“Virginia Woolf was very tall and insane and lived in a lighthouse and jumped in the ocean”* Michael Cunningham.<sup>584</sup>

The publication of Quentin Bell’s biography in 1972, as noted by Silver, is a significant moment in the development of Woolf’s iconicity. Critical, for this thesis, is the manner in which Bell’s biography presented Woolf as, in Silver’s words, a “twentieth-century madwoman with a bedroom of her own”.<sup>585</sup> Bell’s biography depicted a fragile, vulnerable, blue-blooded woman whose outbursts were an embarrassment and burden to her loyal and patient (hero of a) husband, Leonard, and who, incidentally, wrote the odd novel. It is this image which endured, and arguably still endures today. The durability of such an image is cemented by what Silver describes as “the authority almost universally granted to Quentin Bell on the grounds of his family relationship to Woolf”.<sup>586</sup> Bell is granted the dual authority associated with being both a blood-relation and a biographer. His authority has been repeatedly questioned and interrogated over the decades by feminist critics and scholars of Woolf as well as, more recently, by Woolf’s other leading biographer, Hermione Lee. Lee, perhaps more favourably than others, summarises Bell’s Woolf as: “eccentric genius, brilliant comic aunt, enchanting friend.”<sup>587</sup> In spite of



this questioning and the release of another, authoritative biography, the eccentric genius is, more often than not, reduced to the figure of the hysteric, another mad-woman writer who killed herself.

It is pertinent that the ever-lasting and derogatory image of Woolf as mad-woman was promoted by a male family member; a similar image remains in the cultural consciousness of a woman renamed Dora. Feminist criticism has, as I have discussed earlier, sought to redress the familial censorship of Dora, and Silver's discussion of Bell's biography echoes this:

Families, it should go without saying, have a way of labelling or as-signing places to their members that often bears little relationship to the individual's social relations and image in the rest of the world.<sup>588</sup>

This can be easily read as arguing families have a way of projecting their image of said member, such as Dora not as victim of some perverse sexual exchange but as an hysterical girl, into the public sphere. Rather than questioning Bell's family politics that underly his representation of Woolf he is, Silver argues, credited by his reviewers "as revealing 'the truth'", one which "helped create the image of Virginia Woolf as twentieth-century madwoman with a bedroom of her own ... that survived well into the 1990s and still surfaces today".<sup>589</sup> The release of Daldry's adaptation *The Hours* in 2001 and its critical reception highlight the perspicacity of Silver's comment over a decade after the publication of her study. This propagation of Woolf as madwoman is again noted by Silver in her comparative analysis of Woolf and Marilyn Monroe as female icons during which she states: "Both tend to be defined by their perceived vulnerability, fragility, sickness, and madness", as well as their childlessness and their deaths.<sup>590</sup>

The image of Woolf as madwoman is evident in the above quotations in which Stephen Frears and Michael Cunningham summarise their preconceptions of Woolf. It is Cunningham's sentiments that are most pertinent to this study. In the numerous interviews following his Pulitzer award Michael Cunningham was repeatedly asked about the moment he encountered Woolf for the first time, his answer being from a fellow high-school student who mentioned Woolf, alongside Eliot, during a conversation had over a cigarette. What is interesting is Cunningham's own preconception of Woolf prior to his reading of her work: "I wasn't completely illiterate – I had heard of T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf, and I knew Virginia Woolf was very tall and insane and lived in a lighthouse and jumped in the



ocean".<sup>591</sup> Whether Cunningham is being consciously playful in his allusion to this misconception of Woolf – note the confusion of biography and fiction as he imagines her living in a lighthouse and suicidal drowning in the ocean – or his answer is honest (and I suspect it is a combination of the two) is not important. In this anecdotal revelation of Cunningham's teenage discovery of Woolf and *Mrs Dalloway* we can see how an idea of Woolf precedes any textual encounters, whether fictional, critical, or biographical, as Cunningham describes what he had "heard of" Woolf. The simple (mis)summation reveals much about what may be understood as Woolf's cultural iconicity: her physical presence, her madness, the conflation of biography and fiction, and her suicide. It is interesting that Cunningham weaves the different strands of Woolf's iconicity to produce what is clearly a misrepresentation of Woolf, merging the boundaries between fact and fiction as he houses Woolf in one of her novels. Cunningham's summation is an acute illustration of how mythology converges with biography, or what Lee terms "biomythography," and as such foregrounds a key factor to consider when examining his novel, and its film adaptation: the role of (popular) cultural iconicity.

In her biography of Woolf Hermione Lee seeks to undo this problematic reduction by addressing how Woolf battled her illness throughout her life. In a chapter entitled "'Madness'" Lee details Woolf's bouts of depression, her symptoms (quoting both Woolf and those around her) and the measures adopted to bring Woolf out of the madness.<sup>592</sup> In the oft-cited opening to the chapter Lee states:

Virginia Woolf was a sane woman who had an illness. She was often a patient, but not a victim. She was not weak, or hysterical, or self-deluding, or guilty, or oppressed. ... She endured, periodically, great agony of mind and severe physical pain, with remarkably little self-pity.

Her illness is attributable to genetic, environmental and biological factors. It was periodic and recurrent. It was precipitated, but not indubitably caused, by the things which happened to her. ... Five times in her life ... she suffered from major onslaughts of the illness and in almost all (possibly all) of these attacks she attempted to kill herself. ... For most of her life she was vulnerable to recurrent episodes whose symptoms might range from weeks of intense depression to a night's anxiety or a sudden faint.<sup>593</sup>

Lee represents Woolf's illness as a part of her life, something which deeply affected her (and her writing) but something which did not define her. She outlines the physical symptoms as well as describing those mental ones such as the



“voices” which Woolf references in her suicide note. Throughout the biography Lee demonstrates how Woolf continuously battled her symptoms, ranging from fainting spells to debilitating headaches, in order to continue as a writer, a publisher, a wife, a sister, an aunt and all those other “roles” she fulfilled during her lifetime. For Lee, Woolf’s was “a life of heroism, not of oppression, a life of writing wrestled from illness, fear, and pain” and when addressing her “madness” suggests that “[w]e can only look at what it did to her, and what she did with it”.<sup>594</sup> In addition, she warns us to avoid psychoanalysing Woolf through her fiction, as for instance Louise de Salvo attempts in *Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Work*, reminding us that “madness is not her only subject”.<sup>595</sup>

Lee argues that for Woolf her madness was not a mere affliction but something that contributed to her writing, especially in “her creation of a language which [both] faces it and makes something of it”.<sup>596</sup> It is in the character of Septimus Smith that this is most apparent – a character who, like Woolf, experiences aural hallucinations and is subjected to the tyrannical attitudes of (male) medical practitioners, the two distinct perspectives competing with the other. In *Mrs Dalloway* this becomes a competition between the language of the hysteric (Septimus) and the oppressive language of doctors (Holmes and Bradshaw). Lee also demonstrates how Woolf consciously strove to distance herself from Septimus – her bid to remove, or at least reduce, autobiography in her writing is depicted by Lee as being a constant battle by Woolf against “the damned egotistical self”<sup>597</sup> – as she demonstrates below, quoting from the *Mrs Dalloway Holograph* housed at the Berg collection at the New York Public Library:

‘Egotism’ must be countered by narrative ‘control’. Septimus should not only be ‘founded on me’ but ‘might be left vague – as a mad person is – not so much character as an idea’. ... In the changes from manuscript to the finished version, she turns what reads like a direct transcription of her own experience as a ‘mental patient’ into a less self-referential, more abstracted narrative.<sup>598</sup>

It is interesting that Cunningham’s novel reinforces the link between Woolf and Septimus, however, the relationship created by Cunningham is more complex than a simple (re)insertion of the autobiographical.

The complex relationship between Woolf, hysterical iconicity, and her biographers’ truths is, perhaps surprisingly, played out through her last piece of writ-



ing, which Cunningham reproduces in his novel: her suicide note, or rather, suicide notes to Leonard. Virginia Woolf produced more than one suicide note and whilst it is common knowledge that she left individual notes for husband Leonard and her sister Vanessa on the mantelpiece (according to Quentin Bell<sup>599</sup>) or the table (according to Hermione Lee<sup>600</sup>) of the upstairs sitting-room in Monk's House there is a third note that is rarely mentioned, which was left in her writing lodge at the bottom of the garden. The notes Woolf left to Leonard and Vanessa were dated "Tuesday", Woolf's suicide was Friday March 28<sup>th</sup>. Hermione Lee notes that on Tuesday March 18<sup>th</sup> Woolf was observed by Leonard returning from her daily walk "dripping wet and shivering", an event which is understood to be an unsuccessful attempt to drown herself. Leonard's recollection and the "Tuesday" written at the top of the letter is used to date it, although the absence of a numerical date has academics and historians debating whether it was written the following Tuesday, a few days before the successful suicide. For the purposes of this study the exact dating of the first suicide note is not important, but what its production implies. The act of writing the note significantly in advance of the suicide is suggestive of Woolf's state of mind, as Lee comments: "[t]he writing of the letter, and the act it presaged, though an act *in extremis*, was rational, deliberate, and courageous."<sup>601</sup> The sense of an act of suicide being rational, deliberate and courageous is reminiscent of the sense of calm and rational deliberation Septimus exudes during his final moments in Woolf's novel. Lee's analysis of the contents of the note reinforces this as she describes its writer as "a person in despair, with no sense of a future, and suffering from a terrible fear of the possibility of a breakdown with no prospect of recovery"; they are not someone who is "irrational or mad".<sup>602</sup>

Inserting this note into the prologue allows Cunningham to present the reader with this counter-image of the hysterical suicide, offering a presentation of the suicide as a considered choice by someone who feels her, and her family's, future will be dictated and defined by a(nother) nervous breakdown. Woolf's decision, as expressed in this note, demonstrates a clear awareness of her own mental illness and the toll it will take, not just on her but her family, her "dearest". In committing suicide Woolf is not only freeing herself from future torment, she is already experiencing the inability to read and to write "properly" and feels she "can't fight any longer", but, she writes, it will also free Leonard to continue working which her illness will otherwise spoil.<sup>603</sup>



The second note to Leonard, undated and found in Woolf's writing lodge, strongly echoes the sentiments of the earlier one. However, although some of its phrases are almost identical to its predecessor, it is structured differently. The first note opens with the articulation of her fear of "madness" and the return of those voices before she describes the happiness her marriage to Leonard has afforded her. This is then followed with "this terrible disease" which has, and will, spoil both their lives despite all Leonard's efforts to save her, before closing with the famous: "I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been."<sup>604</sup> The second note, by contrast, opens not with madness but by addressing Leonard and their "complete happiness" before moving on to "this madness" and how it will impede his, and her, work.<sup>605</sup> Again, Woolf notes how it is "this disease" which has disrupted their "perfectly happy" lives together and closes by stating how "good" he has been since their first day together.<sup>606</sup> Overleaf she directs him to a pile of Roger Fry's letters (presumably research for his biography) before asking him: "Will you destroy all my papers."<sup>607</sup> Whilst there is little difference between the messages, as my summation demonstrates, there has been a shift in the structuring of the final note which both opens and closes with comments celebrating their marriage. Crudely speaking the final note is arranged as follows: 1) Happiness ("that you have given me"), 2) Madness (irrecoverable), 3) Disruption to their working lives, 4) Madness ("terrible disease"), and 5) Happy ("[you] have been so good"). One can see how the significant sentiment for Woolf is their happiness together which sandwiches their successful working lives. The note's structure reflects this, illustrating the disruptive nature of her illness which destroys the couple's perfect and complete relationships, personal and working. For comparison, the earlier note's structure is: 1) Madness (irrecoverable), 2) Happiness ("that you have given me"), 3) Madness ("terrible disease"), 4) Disruption to their working lives, 5) "If anyone could have saved me it would have been you", and 6) Happy ("your goodness"). This note opens with madness, thus, its structure does not echo its disruptive position in their lives in contrast to the final note where it sits inbetween Woolf's discussion of happiness and work. It is as if in its revised form, the note is more developed in terms of its style – even in her final act of writing Woolf continues to revise her earlier written work.

In his "official" biography written and published with Leonard Woolf's permission, Quentin Bell reproduces the first note only – it was not until ten years



later that the second note was published in the edited collection of Woolf's letters. Bell describes Woolf's final acts of writing as follows:

On the morning of Friday 28 March, a bright, clear, cold day, Virginia went as usual to her studio room in the garden. There she wrote two letters, one for Leonard, one for Vanessa – the two people she loved best. In both letters she explained that she was hearing voices, believed she could never recover; she could not go on and spoil Leonard's life for him. Then she went back into the house and wrote again to Leonard [quotes first letter].<sup>608</sup>

In Woolf's final preparations it is Leonard who dominates Bell's biographical account with its representation of Woolf's fears for the quality of his life. Interestingly, this reflects a tendency of Bell's to foreground the impact of Woolf's mental illness on Leonard – something which manifests itself from the beginning of the second volume. In his discussion of Woolf's bout of mental illness which occurred during the first three years of their marriage Bell describes two of Woolf's close friends as being "Leonard's best allies in the calamities of the ensuing years".<sup>609</sup> It is a narrative of Leonard's lifelong patience, his suffering, his life being "spoilt" by Woolf's illness; Bell declares the "more harrowing symptoms" to be the occasions when "Virginia was violent and screaming, and her madness culminated in virulent animosity towards Leonard".<sup>610</sup> Woolf's own final struggle with the onset of a nervous breakdown, her symptoms and her decline, being all but absent from Bell's account which focuses on the disruption to Leonard's, not Woolf's, life. The trend to present the disruption Woolf's illness had on others' lives, as opposed to her own, extends to others, such as the physician Octavia Wilberforce. Wilberforce who saw Woolf despite her own ill-health, is described by Bell as having been "desperate ... only [just] able to crawl out of bed".<sup>611</sup> In his description of the appointment Bell describes Wilberforce as "heroic" whilst Woolf's behaviour was "like that of a child being sent to bed".<sup>612</sup> This sense of Woolf as a disruption to the "adults" around her, whilst echoing her own thoughts that she impinged on Leonard's work, produces a reductive portrait of Woolf's illness: her symptoms are reduced to the behaviour of a petulant child and she is presented as selfishly inconveniencing those around her who selflessly come to her aid.<sup>613</sup> Bell, rather than presenting Woolf's battle with her illness, was more concerned with demonstrating how it affected those around her, especially Leonard. Even more disturbing is that Bell's biography was received as an official insight into the mad woman



writer and it is this image of Woolf, as victim and victimiser of her heroic family and friends that, arguably, continues to prevail today.

I would like to return to the notion of versions and the issue of how the two suicide notes influence the Woolf icon(s). One striking difference between the two notes is the following line which I identified as point five in my summation of the earlier note: "If anybody could have saved me it would have been you." I would argue that it is this line that led to the inclusion of the first, rather than the second note, in Bell's biography and its subsequent predominance in culture.<sup>614</sup> In this construction Woolf is not the one who makes the "rational, deliberate and courageous" decision, as Lee argues, but is a woman who could not be saved. Leonard is the hero, albeit one who ultimately fails in his near thirty-year (epic) battle against Woolf's madness; Woolf is the unredeemable victim. The polarisation of Bell's and Lee's biographies (and do not forget that these were the "prominent" sources in Cunningham's research,<sup>615</sup>) is reinforced by Silver who juxtaposes "Lee's evocation of Virginia Woolf's heroism" with Bell's biography as "fail[ing] to present the writer as a heroic figure".<sup>616</sup> One other difference between the two notes that I perceive as being key to the apparent preference for the first note and negation of the second: on the reverse page of the second note Woolf asked Leonard to "destroy all my papers", a request he very publicly ignored by publishing extracts from her diaries.<sup>617</sup> Had Bell reproduced this note he would have undermined his portrayal of the long suffering hero, Leonard, for what hero who had dedicated his life and sacrificed so much for the sake of his wife would disregard her dying wishes?

A final reason why this letter may be predominant is historical – during the inquest into Woolf's death (held April 19<sup>th</sup>, the day after her body was discovered) the coroner, Lee informs us, "read out some of the 'Tuesday' suicide note, mis-quoting it", an error which was duplicated by subsequent newspaper reports. The official cause of death was noted, and subsequently registered on the death certificate, as "Immersion in the River on 28 March 1941 by her own act so killing herself while the balance of her mind was disturbed" and finally, that "death was due to drowning".<sup>618</sup> Lee cites some of these "mis-quotations" from an article which appeared in the *Southern Weekly News* (26 April 1941) which foreground the madness — "I hear voices and I cannot concentrate on my work"<sup>619</sup>— alongside comments suggesting Leonard's heroism and Woolf's own surrender: "I can-



not fight any longer. I know I am spoiling your life. You have been perfectly good to me.”<sup>620</sup> Lee comments that despite the suicide notes, and Leonard’s personal campaign to rectify the mis-quoting in the media, an alternative image emerged:

Woolf killed herself because she thought she was about to have a mental breakdown ... the story of the feeble, delicate lady authoress giving up on the war-effort began to be built into the posthumous myths of Virginia Woolf. That image of a sensitive, aesthetic, nervous creature, too fragile for her own good, was being processed, in these few weeks after her death, by the (mostly male) writers who wrote their tributes to her ... [and which] the respectful reviews [of *Between the Acts* in the following July] persisted in [presenting] the image of a thin-blooded, lyrical, delicate, sensitive, exquisitely imaginative writer, described by one reviewer as ‘a war casualty’.<sup>621</sup>

Woolf’s first (male) biographer further authenticated this image of the frail blue-blooded authoress with his representation of this “nervous creature” and hysterical wife. Subsequent images of Woolf have emerged, such as Lee’s heroic writer who constantly battled with her condition. Having explored two biographical truths, or “versions”, of Woolf’s madness and suicide, I would like now to turn to a fictional portrait: Cunningham’s prologue to *The Hours*.

### **A Writer’s Suicide: Imitated in Fiction**

*The Hours* begins with the end, the suicide of Virginia in 1941,<sup>622</sup> and it ends with its own beginning: the last sentences of the Mrs. Woolf strand represent the birth of *Mrs. Dalloway* the novel, Woolf’s vision, with the very last pages of *The Hours* embodying Woolf’s vision for her novel through Clarissa Vaughan’s story. *The Hours* thus presents the reader with the death of the author but also the author, through her writing, living on. Thus, Cunningham’s prologue presents us with a paradox: on the one hand he has, in a fictionalisation of Barthes’ seminal essay, killed off Woolf; however, he has simultaneously brought her back to life by, again paradoxically, opening with her death. Woolf is, dead or alive, the novel’s prologue, she is its introduction, and she is both removed from and situated firmly within the narrative that follows. It is pertinent to consider the novel’s foregrounding of Woolf’s death, specifically her suicide, as well as the fictionalisation of the theoretical death of the author in a novel which, by representing a day in the life of the author, is firmly (re)inserting the author into the text.



In "The Death of the Author" (1968), Roland Barthes disrupted the author's position in relation to the text by introducing the role of the reader as an integral component in the production of meaning: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."<sup>623</sup> Barthes proposed that the text's meaning is constructed from a variety of cultural and textual components of which the author is just one, a theory adopted and augmented by Kristeva as I explored in chapter one. The "death" of the (privileging of the) author therefore opens the way for reading the text in a manner akin to Kristevan intertextuality:

Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.<sup>624</sup>

However, the inclusion of the death of this author, as I shall discuss later in relation to the reception of the film adaptation, only serves to incentivise a singular, true, authorised, reading.

Whether it is Cunningham's *intention* to distance himself from these biographical works is not of interest to this study, and to approach such a question would only impose a limited reading onto the text, the sort that Barthes' essay attempted to remove, replacing one author with another. It is rather more interesting to consider when examining the impact of the suicide as prologue is the influence of another, alternative anterior text: the Woolf scholar. Within Woolf studies there has been a demonstrable move to (re) insert Woolf into her fiction with the prevalent and recurring question: "What did Woolf mean by this?" This is a particularly peculiar trend considering Woolf's determination to remove all traces of autobiography from her fiction. In addition, there are those Woolf scholars who seek to psychoanalyse Woolf through her own fiction, again an odd move considering both Woolf's reluctance to be psychoanalysed during her lifetime and her considered and deliberate censorship of the autobiographical from her fiction.<sup>625</sup> One leading example features in Cunningham's own list of sources, as reproduced in the novel, Louise de Salvo's *Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on her Life and Work*.<sup>626</sup> In killing Woolf off in the opening sequence Cunningham is, I argue, distancing himself from these sorts of readings that seek to (re)insert an authority figure into a fiction that sought to do the reverse. Through a close reading of the prologue I will demonstrate how it functions as a device to establish a relationship, not of authorial authority, but of an author's style.



Woolf, as I discussed in chapter 2, rejected and sought to subvert the narrative conventions that dominated fiction in the early twentieth century, most notably those that prevailed in the work of the Materialists. In a deft move Cunningham echoes Woolf's rejection and subversion of narrative convention as he exposes the inadequacy of prologues and epilogues in representing the minutiae of life and capturing those ordinary day-to-day experiences, the "proper stuff of fiction". Cunningham's prologue introduces Woolf, a character and author, at the moment of her demise, thus beginning with the end. However, her end is not the end of his narrative, far from it. The prologue, whilst depicting Woolf's death, is primarily concerned with Woolf's experience of the world and the impressions it generates in the moments leading up to her death. After her death the passage continues with its impressionistic representation as it portrays Woolf's corpse floating down the river and the sensations it impresses upon the observing narrator — just as Woolf's *Orlando* is not contained by normative temporality, Cunningham's narrative of Woolf is not impeded by death. Finally, the prologue reads like an epitaph, a posthumous homage, not to Woolf, but to Woolf's writing. Whilst representing Woolf's suicide, her death, the passage is dominated by a narrative style that consciously mimics Woolf's rhetoric, thus positioning Woolf's writing as much as Woolf's suicide, if not more so, as a central concern of the prologue, and the novel.

The prologue, then, as a fictional representation of Woolf's suicide opens as follows:

She hurries from the house, wearing a coat too heavy for the weather. It is 1941. Another war has begun. She has left a note for Leonard, and another for Vanessa. She walks purposefully toward the river, certain of what she'll do, but even now she is almost distracted by the sight of the downs, the church, and a scattering of sheep, incandescent, tinged with a faint hint of sulfur, grazing under the darkening sky. She pauses, watching the sheep and the sky, then walks on. The voices murmur behind her; bombers drown in the sky, though she looks for the planes she can't see them.<sup>627</sup>

The opening sentences create a sense of contradiction, but not, it should be added, confusion. "She" is in a hurry, "she" is walking with purpose and certainty, yet pauses, distracted by the landscape and sheep. Cunningham's Virginia Woolf, in the moments before death, still reflects upon the myriad impressions that dominated her writing; the sights and sounds of the world around her draw her atten-



tion much as the man opposite attracted Septimus's attention as he sat on the window sill. And, just as Septimus is brought out of his momentary enjoyment of life by the threat of Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw's homes, Virginia Woolf continues to walk to her death as the sounds of the bombers and the murmuring voices return, reminding Woolf of the two threats to her life: the Nazi invasion and her madness. This Woolf is not the image of childish petulance presented by Bell, this is the calm, rational, determined woman portrayed by Lee. This scene is equally reminiscent of Woolf's own fictional creation, the visionary and poet, Septimus Smith who rationally decides which would be his best method of suicide. Woolf, echoing Septimus's behaviour, has come prepared: she wears "a coat too heavy for the weather." The passage refuses to present Woolf as an irrational hysteric, there is no sense of panic nor are the impressions confused (or confusing). Woolf's actions, like the narration, are unrushed and deliberate, they are both "purposeful". The second and third sentences relate a strong sense of awareness and undermine common conceptions of insanity and hysteria as Woolf is thoroughly aware of her present and the impression afforded is one which presents Woolf as being *compos mentis*.

The opening passage, quoted above, establishes a stylistic relationship between Cunningham's novel and Woolf's writing as it imitates Woolf's own rhetoric. Employing Genette, as discussed in chapter one, we can determine this imitative relationship to contrast the satirical or derisive style (caricature) Woolf employed in her imitation of Bennett in her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs Brown", as examined in chapter two. Nor is the imitation an attempt at a "continuation"; although one may argue it is "serious" in tone it cannot accurately be described as an extension of its hypotext. Therefore, it is pastiche, a playful imitation designed to be entertaining but not to satirise or ridicule. Chatman, whilst noting the impossibility of distinguishing *The Hours* as either pastiche or forgery, noted that "ludic pastiche ... offers homage", and I would argue that Cunningham's imitative style is closest to homage as at no point is there the slightest element of ridicule. The qualification of how to categorise *The Hours* and Cunningham's imitation of Woolf using Genette may be difficult; the very presence of stylistic imitation cannot be denied. I intend, therefore, to focus upon how Cunningham develops a stylistic relationship with Woolf, exploring the devices and strategies employed.



To return to my discussion of stylistic imitation in the opening passage: first, there is the presence of the impressions of everyday life along the banks of the river which is juxtaposed with the impending doom felt by the onset of her madness: "The voices are back and the headache is approaching as surely as the rain, the headache that will crush whatever is she and replace her with itself."<sup>628</sup> The passage employs the very language Woolf herself used to describe her symptoms:

wearisome headache, jumping pulse, aching back, frets, fidgets, lying awake, sleeping draughts, sedatives, digitalis, going for a little walk, & plunging back into bed again – all the horrors of the dark cupboard of illness once more displayed for my diversion.<sup>629</sup>

Whilst a knowledge of Woolf's personal writings, or biographical writings discussing Woolf's madness, would function as extratextual referents explaining the association between the headaches and the madness, the link is also made intratextually as Cunningham juxtaposes the commonly understood symptom of madness, hearing voices, with the less widely known symptom which Woolf frequently noted, the headaches. In spite of the crushing symptoms Woolf continues to make mental notes of the world around as she passes through it: "there's a fisherman upriver, far away, he won't notice her"; she observes the "yellow surface of the river (more yellow than brown when seen this close)" whilst standing waist high in its "chill water", before stumbling forwards with the pocketed stone pulling her forwards and the river's current which "wraps itself around her and takes her with such sudden, muscular force it feels as if a strong man has risen from the bottom, grabbed her legs and held them to his chest".<sup>630</sup> The passage juxtaposes clarity of vision with the act of suicide, the sane with the insane, one in continual conflict with the other. What is clear is the lack, or disintegration, of the binary which divides the sane and the insane, as the reader must reconcile themselves with a suicide which is calmly considered and purposefully executed – the fisherman and farm-worker whom she passes do not register anything untoward (e.g. hysteria) in Mrs. Woolf's riverside stroll. Mrs. Woolf, even when committing suicide, is far from the figure of the hysteric most commonly associated with the insane woman.

The prologue does not terminate with Woolf's drowning, it continues with Leonard finding his note from Woolf, his desperate search for her, before concluding with a series of subaquatic reflections on life as it continues above water. It is this continuation of the narrative which foregrounds the prologue's rhetorical rela-



tionship with Woolf's writing. Immediately following Woolf's submersion, with no page break just a new paragraph, the narrative jumps to Leonard's story: "more than an hour later, her husband returns from the garden" to be told by the maid that "'Madame went out'".<sup>631</sup> Woolf frequently jumps between narrators and/or focalisers in fiction with little or no introduction other than a shift in tone, a move which invites the reader to engage with what they are reading. Woolf also refused to adopt normative conventions, such as beginning at the beginning, so by beginning with the end, and an end which does not end at the end, Cunningham can be seen to be echoing Woolf's refutation of the normative.

The passage, continuing in the third person, present tense narration Cunningham uses throughout his novel, follows Leonard as he finds Woolf's suicide note: "Leonard goes upstairs to the sitting room to listen to the news. He finds a blue envelope, addressed to him, on the table. Inside is a letter."<sup>632</sup> The narrative is infused with biographical detail: in her biography Lee notes that "[Woolf] must have left the earlier letters, in blue envelopes marked 'Leonard' and 'Vanessa', in the upstairs sitting-room, on the table".<sup>633</sup> In addition, Cunningham reproduces Woolf's note in the same format as it was originally written, and as it is presented in Lee's biography but not Bell's, with only a single sentence filling the page width. It is also italicised, which is suggestive of its hand-written origins as well as replicating the novel's formatting of all the direct quotations from *Mrs Dalloway*, thus foregrounding it as an intertextual referent, visually aligning biographical material with fiction.

Following the presentation of Woolf's suicide note there are two short paragraphs, occupying about a third of a page, detailing Leonard's desperate search for Woolf: "Leonard rushes out and goes to the river, past the church and the sheep, past the osier bed. At the riverbank he finds no one but a man in a red jacket, fishing."<sup>634</sup> The passage depicting Leonard's journey is considerably shorter than the representation of Mrs. Woolf's, and it presents a somewhat economic depiction of the landscape which occupied the two and half pages dedicated to Mrs. Woolf's walk. Most notable is the sudden absence of the trivial impressions and mental meanderings which littered Mrs. Woolf's walk. Instead details are kept to a minimum such as the colour of the envelope containing Woolf's note or the fisherman's jacket. Significantly, this economical narrative reflects biographical detail: Leonard was an intensely frugal man who kept account of all household



expenditures, no matter how small. Leonard Woolf's financial thrift in life is thus translated into the narration through the shift in focalisation. Cunningham, therefore, is imitating the multiple focalisation Woolf employed in her writing, as I discussed in relation to the skywriter scene in *Mrs Dalloway*.

What then follows is a representation of Woolf's Ophelia-like underwater journey as she was "borne quickly along by the current" before reaching her final resting place, propped against a bridge's submerged underpinnings.<sup>635</sup> It is at this moment that Cunningham stretches the conventions of narration and narrative focalisation as the drowned Woolf is represented as a "fantastic figure" on a submerged flight down stream:

She appears to be flying, a fantastic figure, arms outstretched, hair streaming, the tail of the fur coat billowing behind. She floats, heavily, through shafts of brown, granular light. She does not travel far. Her feet (the shoes are gone) strike the bottom occasionally, and when they do they summon up a sluggish cloud of muck, filled with black silhouettes of leaf skeletons, that stands all but stationary in the water after she has passed along out of sight. Stripes of green-black weed catch in her hair and the fur of her coat, and for a while her eyes are blindfolded by a thick swatch of weed, which finally loosens itself and floats, twisting and untwisting and twisting again.<sup>636</sup>

The style of the description of Woolf's submerged corpse mirrors that which opened the prologue describing Woolf's walk. The acutely observed poetic descriptions of the water and the behaviour of its weeds introduce a sense of the fantastic – a notion which becomes increasingly uncanny when one realises that the implied focaliser, Woolf, is actually dead. The description of the black silhouettes of leaf skeletons creates the impression of a dark, underwater catacomb in which the dead are suspended, frozen in space and time, and heightens the uncanny sensation by introducing an unnatural, hence fantastical, quality to the scene. The passage cannot be focalised through Mrs. Woolf, she is dead after all, and whilst the rhetoric may imply her focalisation the narration determines its omniscience by distancing itself from the scene, observing how *her* feet catch on the riverbed, how weeds get caught in *her* hair and blindfold *her* eyes. In mirroring the ambiguous nature of the narration and focalisation of Woolf's novels, the passage further evokes the sense that Mrs. Woolf is the focaliser as the poetic descriptions of the eerie skeleton leaves and granular light are fleetingly interrupted by this act of blindfolding; the moment the weeds release her eyes the poetic imagery



flows freely once more. It is not simply the poetic discourse that imitates Woolf's style, but the manner in which the narrative is suspended, distracted, or even blinded, echoing the characters' experience.

The final paragraph of the prologue similarly illustrates the ambiguity inherent to Woolf's writing as imitated by Cunningham. It opens as follows:

Here they are, on a day early in the Second World War: the boy and his mother on the bridge, the stick floating over the water's surface, and Virginia's body at the river's bottom, as if she is dreaming of the surface, the stick, the boy and his mother, the sky and the rooks.<sup>637</sup>

The narration remains omniscient, capturing the scene as a whole rather than through an individual character's eyes but its style continues to evoke Woolf. Despite her death Mrs. Woolf remains connected to the world she inhabited in life, as the final sentence of the prologue suggests:

All this enters the bridge, resounds through its wood and stone, and enters Virginia's body. Her face, pressed sideways to the piling, absorbs it all: the truck and the soldiers, the mother and child.<sup>638</sup>

Impressions, it would seem, are privileged over all else, verisimilitude is undermined and a character's impressions even prevail over their death. The myriad impressions were central to Woolf's concept of fiction writing, of representing the world and Cunningham reflects this as Mrs. Woolf continues to absorb and be impressed by her environs.

The final sentence also brings to the fore how impressions are drawn not only by sight but by our other senses, such as, in this instance, sound — a necessity when Mrs. Woolf is submerged at the bottom of a murky river, forcibly facing the bridge pilings and, above all else, dead. The move away from visual to aural is suggested earlier when it is related that "[c]ars and trucks rumble over the bridge",<sup>639</sup> as well as in the opening paragraph when Mrs. Woolf hears but cannot see the bombers. In Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* the skywriter first enters the narrative aurally, the noise from its engines "bored ominously into the ears of the crowd".<sup>640</sup> The prologue also introduces the sense of touch, when Mrs. Woolf notes how the stone and river water is cold. It is worth noting how the sound of the passing traffic resonates through the bridge and its pilings to be absorbed by Mrs. Woolf, something which merges the sensations of touch and sound. This multiplicity of sensation echoes Woolf's move away from the dominance of the visual



in the work of the Materialists, with the notion of resonance reflecting Woolf's "myriad impressions" which continually fall upon the subject as both imply the lack of control one has on the reception of such impressions – one can shut one's eyes but it is difficult to shut off the sense of touch or hearing. This is important to note as it reduces the (illusion of) authorial manipulation of the narration, such as Bennett's use of a land-lord's arrival to shift perspective in *Hilda Lessways*, and how this may control the representation of impressions and observations related as well as moving away from omniscient objectivity towards individual subjectivity (or subjectivities).

The close of the prologue, as I have noted, cannot be observed by the submerged, dead Woolf but the tone and style of the narration confuses such distinctions. This is reinforced through the passage's intertextual relationship with Woolf's other novels, namely *The Voyage Out* and *The Waves*. Towards the end of *The Voyage Out* the protagonist Rachel Vinrace develops a "suffocating" fever and as her delirium worsens her caring friends "gabble unintelligibly" until

At last the faces went further away; she fell into a deep pool of sticky water, which eventually closed over her head. She saw nothing and heard nothing but a faint booming sound, which was the sound of the sea rolling over her head. While all her tormentors thought that she was dead, she was not dead, but curled up at the bottom of the sea. There she lay, sometimes seeing darkness, sometimes light, while every now and then someone turned her over at the bottom of the sea.<sup>641</sup>

A week later Rachel's fever breaks and once again she is conscious of her surroundings having resurfaced from the "sticky pool, ... she lay on the top of the wave conscious of some pain, but chiefly of weakness."<sup>642</sup> The image of being submerged in water, specifically the ocean in this instance, is aligned with the experience of slipping in and out of consciousness, the water's surface representing the tenuous line dividing life and death, as well as demarcating the boundary between being sane and deliriously insane. The precarious nature of Rachel's illness, the fine line between her living and her dying, is captured by the imagery of floating on a wave – the threat of going under, of remaining conscious, is constant as "for long periods of time she [Rachel] would merely lie conscious of her body floating on the top of the bed and her mind driven to some remote corner of her body, or escaped and gone flitting round the room".<sup>643</sup> The narratives of Rachel and Mrs Woolf both incorporate imagery presenting an unusual underwater expe-



rience – one a delirious experience imagined by the character, the other posited as being the experience of the dead character. Rachel, like Mrs Woolf, remains connected to the surface despite being submerged, the dead linked to the living, the insane to the sane. In addition Rachel's merely lying on her bed is quite a passive response to her illness with her mind being pushed out by the fever; this is clearly a figure who is barely living, someone who is almost waiting for that final wave that will take them under.

Rachel's experience of floating on her bed is the last moment in the narrative when she is the focaliser. Following this passage the focalisation is dominated by others discussing her situation. Terence, Rachel's fiancé, then dominates the focalisation, as his thoughts are suddenly preoccupied with the realisation that her fever, now a fortnight old, will likely kill her. Terence goes to Rachel's side when it is clear she has little time remaining, sharing a moment's closeness monitoring her breathing before she finally stops breathing when: "Unconscious whether he thought the word or spoke them aloud, he said, 'No two people have ever been so happy as we have been. No one has ever loved as we have loved.'" <sup>644</sup> Terence's comments on his relationship with his now dead fiancée stem from the sense of peace he now feels from being together and alone with Rachel, a moment when he feels himself as being united, completely, with Rachel – they, he feels, are now one. It is significant that Terence's words prefigure those Woolf wrote over twenty-five years later in her suicide note to Leonard, as reproduced in *The Hours*' prologue: "I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been". <sup>645</sup> It is interesting that it is the words of Terence, and not the delirious Rachel, in other words those of someone sane and not on the brink of death, that foreshadow those written by Woolf to her husband.

It is the circuitous nature of intertextuality, as foregrounded by the work of McFarlane, as well as more recently Sanders and Hutcheon, that enables us to conceive of a web-like series of relationships operating between and across different texts. Woolf's experience of drowning, as written by Cunningham, echoes Rachel Vinrace's experience of a fever-induced coma, and Rachel's fiancé's description of their relationship prefigures that of Woolf's final description of her marriage to Leonard, which Cunningham in turn cites. With this example we find ourselves coming full circle as we read one text in another with that other text then returning us to the initial text. However, introducing further Woolf texts into the equa-



tion complicates the Woolfian intertextuality, producing a web of Woolfian intertextuality.

There has been much written on the theme of waves in Woolf's fiction and it seems only logical to turn to Woolf's novel *The Waves* to develop this specifically Woolfian web of intertextuality. In *The Waves* Rhoda is the novel's outsider who commits suicide, and dreams "of plants that flower under the sea, and rocks through which the fish swim slowly".<sup>646</sup> Just as with Rachel Vinrace and Mrs. Woolf, underwater is again a fantastical place, associated with something beyond consciousness – this time not with delusions or death but with the dream world, although Rhoda's subsequent suicide associates her with both insanity and death. Rhoda, in another moment similar to Rachel's, when sleeping, finds herself "suspended on my bed above the world" – the notion of flotation being linked not to fever-induced hallucinations but to dreaming.<sup>647</sup> Floating, as an image, evokes notions of freedom, of being untied. Rhoda, like Mrs. Woolf, is not restricted by convention, whether social or literary; they both are free to absorb their impressions of the world around them, not tied by the laws of time or space. It is Bernard's summation of Rhoda's life, at the moment when her suicide is discussed, that foregrounds this: "the figure of Rhoda, always so furtive, always with fear in her eyes, always seeking some pillar in the desert, to find which she had gone; she had killed herself."<sup>648</sup> Rhoda's final act is as evasive to those around her as she was in life.

Rhoda, like Septimus Smith the outsider in *Mrs Dalloway*, chooses to take her own life, however, in contrast, it is presented retrospectively through another's perspective in a manner which echoes the objective representations of the deaths of Mrs Ramsey and Prue in *To the Lighthouse*. The outsiders' decisions to commit suicide are subsequently linked to Woolf's own act of suicide through a comment written in a letter of condolence to Leonard by someone who had been institutionalised: "the only right we [society's outsiders] have left" is to choose whether we live or die.<sup>649</sup> The letter-writer's comment, reproduced in Lee's biography which features in Cunningham's list of sources, demonstrates an understanding of the thematic concerns central to Woolf's writing and the experience of being "mad". The strands linking the fictitious to the biographical produces a web of intertextual relations which look beyond the writings of Woolf and through which the "text" of Woolf can be read.



The final element of my reading of *The Waves* as one strand of the intertextual web of relations stems from the textual interludes with their poetic descriptions of waves. *The Modern World: Ten Great Writers*, interestingly, also employs the poetic interludes, and although the two cite different passages, the presence of *The Waves* links the two adaptations through their intertexts. The following quotations all demonstrate an affinity with the rhetoric employed by Cunningham in the prologue:

*"The waves drummed on the shore, like turbaned warriors, like turbaned men with poisoned assegais who, whirling their arms on high, advance upon the feeding flocks, the white sheep."*<sup>650</sup>

*"They drew in and out with the energy, the muscularity, of an engine which sweeps its force out and in again."*<sup>651</sup>

*"The river water held the reeds now fixed as if glass had hardened round them; and then the glass wavered and the reeds swept low."*<sup>652</sup>

*"The dead leaf no longer stood upon its edge, but had been blown, now running, now pausing, against some stalk."*<sup>653</sup>

The first and second quotations reflect the sensation Mrs. Woolf experiences in the prologue when the current, described as a strong man, pulls her away from the surface of the river with a "sudden, muscular force".<sup>654</sup> The third and fourth quotations reflect her underwater "flight" and its juxtaposition of stasis and movement as the "sluggish cloud of muck" kicked up by her feet "stands all but stationary in the water after she has passed along out of sight".<sup>655</sup> It is clear that not only does Cunningham's novel draw upon the rhetoric and narrative style of Woolf's writings there are also a series of intertextual readings which operate between Cunningham's representation of Woolf's suicide and the employment of similar imagery and scenes in Woolf's own writing. These readings reveal how Cunningham's writing, like Woolf's, occupies a space beyond that of normative narrative representation presenting experiences beyond consciousness – of dreams, of comas, and of death.



## Appreciation of the Verbal and Castigation of the Visual

When examining the various reviews of Daldry's *The Hours* I was struck by the number which drew upon the Virginia Woolf icons: Woolf as hysteric, Woolf as fearsome, Woolf as a feminist and Woolf as victim. It was most notable in the criticism (or perhaps commentary would be more apt here as many of the commentators are not film critics) found in what may be understood as the (supposedly more) intellectual media, such as the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*. Many critics and reviewers took the opportunity to focus their commentary on Virginia Woolf, of whom one states: "Virginia Woolf is literary Marmite –rich, dark and repellent to at least 50% of the population."<sup>656</sup> Whether it is Woolf or the depiction of her in *The Hours*, the film itself seemed to be found repellent on all fronts. Philip Hensher bemoans how Woolf is "a secular saint of early feminism and a martyr to those modern obsessions, child abuse and depression", commenting how her position as "one of the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists ... always comes as a secondary consideration, and is taken for granted".<sup>657</sup> The title of Hensher's article, which follows the film's being awarded two Golden Globes, clearly demarcates his position: "Few Authors make one want to vomit: Virginia Woolf does." Peter Bradshaw, like many, reduces the film to one thing, the prosthetic nose Nicole Kidman had to wear, titling his review: "Film of the Week: The nose has it". The review itself is far from critical, Bradshaw is "left cold", mourning the fact that: "Hollywood is a little in love right now with literary Dead White Females, adoring them not for their books but their tragic diseases."<sup>658</sup>

Nicole Tyler in "Why Hollywood and its Moguls are so Afraid of Virginia Woolf" draws upon Woolf as a feminist icon, a victim and a suicide:

Woolf's death has acquired an almost mythical significance . . . particularly to the feminist movement which sees her death as the heroic act of a genius who could not trim the sails of her free, quick spirit to the sluggish wind of marriage and domestic drudgery.<sup>659</sup>

The review considers the film's potential success at the box-office through its appeal to women, arguing that the issues Woolf came up against in her own lifetime are still pertinent to a contemporary audience: "The Woolf's howl continues to echo eerily through the generations."<sup>660</sup> The review proves an interesting oxymoron as it both celebrates "the subversive genius of Virginia Woolf" yet reduces her



to a victim of “domestic drudgery” whose “message was gothic and doom-laden”.<sup>661</sup>

By contrast, Desson Howe writes:

In *The Hours*, the death of the haunted, brilliant British author (played by Nicole Kidman) starts a fatalistic ripple. Decades later, two women (played by Julianne Moore and Meryl Streep) will feel the sad, anxious rhythms of Woolf’s life and death.<sup>662</sup>

Howe produces a critical commentary which addresses Woolf, and her iconicity, but it is contained within a balanced discussion of a film which has three, not one, narratives, observing (and appreciating) the connections across them: “with its deft intercutting of place and time, the film creates a powerful sense of mysticism and fate.”<sup>663</sup> Howe also, it should be noted, mentions Kidman’s prosthetic nose, acknowledging how the attention it has received dominated the media attention the film garnered but, again, in contrast to his peers, he adopts a positive stance, arguing: “it liberates not only Kidman but us. She looks so different ... we are forced to watch her act without thinking about all that celebrity baggage.”<sup>664</sup> It is pertinent to note how the one review examined here that does not feel the need to justify its appreciation of Woolf or overstate its disgust is American. Whilst there is not scope within this study to consider the ramifications of the transatlantic divide, it is something Silver addresses in *Virginia Woolf Icon* where she contrasts Woolf’s cult-like “iconicity in the United States” with Woolf’s position in British culture where her “elevation to iconic status” has been “decidedly slower”.<sup>665</sup>

It is to two particular reviewers I now turn and their, arguably, influential commentaries on the film. The first, Hermione Lee, we have encountered before, whilst the second, Adam Nicolson, is the grandson of Vita Sackville-West with whom Woolf had a famously reported lesbian affair. These two figures both produced damning reviews of Daldry’s film adaptation that focused almost entirely on the “questionable” representation of Woolf on screen. One may question why two inherently literary figures, a biographer and a novelist, have been called upon to comment on or review the film but their authority, to appropriate such a contentious term, lies in their claims to Woolf: Lee’s credentials have been established elsewhere; Nicolson’s come down to biological fact — much like Quentin Bell who could claim biographical authority based upon his familial relationship with Woolf. Despite the fact that Nicolson, unlike Bell, never met Woolf and was not a direct relation, the tangential connection is flaunted in the title: “Tales of Virginia



Woolf, my grandmother's lover."<sup>666</sup> The use of such figures to review the film returns us to Elliott's psychic concept of adaptation and the transposition of "the spirit of the text" from novel to film.<sup>667</sup> The spirit of the text, Elliott notes, "is commonly equated with the spirit of personality of the author".<sup>668</sup> This authorial spirit, or identity, is subsequently "defined and mediated by literary critics" who "are called to authorize or condemn adaptations", a theory illustrated to the full in this instance.<sup>669</sup>

Nicolson describes *The Hours* as "a one dimensional and sentimental view of the author" who "has been floating around (if it is not too callous to use this expression in the circumstances) in the background to my life for as long as I can remember."<sup>670</sup> Nicolson recollects how the summers of his adolescence were filled with Woolf scholars visiting "Bloomsbury-theme-park heaven" who "never got the point".<sup>671</sup> He continues:

Woolf is a writer who inspires a kind of adulation that suspends critical judgement. Her madness and her suicide have pushed her into the realm of sainted geniuses, where she now sits alongside Keats, Emily Dickinson and Sylvia Plath. It's an exclusive club of beautiful tragic writers, the Sad Lit Academy, where the writing has become secondary to the life of exquisite misery.<sup>672</sup>

In an article which, like so many others, fails to consider how the narrative of Mrs Woolf is one part of a tightly woven tripartite narrative, he accuses Daldry's film adaptation of being "drenched in borrowed significance" which "relies for its effects on the myth of the agonised and finally crucified artist".<sup>673</sup> For Nicolson the film "does a very un-Woolfian thing: it reduces the multiplicity of the real thing" by absenting the many (and often contradictory) elements of Woolf's character – for instance, he argues that Woolf's "sheer variability of mind", her being "endlessly curious about the world" is transformed on screen into some sort of Keatsian, romantic concern with death and the beyond as "Kidman's eyes are not focused on the actual but on the dreamily distant".<sup>674</sup> Could this same sort of distance not reflect a writer consumed with her work? One may also wonder how focusing on one element of a multiple narrative does not equate to the same "un-Woolfian" thing.

Nicolson's distaste for the "Sad Lit Academy" and his obsession with biographical (in)accuracy strikes me as being a weighty influence upon his reading of *The Hours*. Whilst quick to accuse the film of committing a travesty in its reduc-



tive representation of Woolf, he himself does exactly the same. For instance, this gazing dreamily into the distance could equally convey Woolf's hunger for writing and her ability to get lost in her work to such a degree that she forgets to eat. Woolf's all-consuming excitement at the prospect of writing, or indeed for the reading and writing of literature, is evident in her letters and diaries as rarely does an entry fail to make reference to something she is writing or reading. This is represented during a scene in which the Woolfs battle over Virginia's breakfasting habits: Woolf shoots Leonard a knowing and mischievous look as she silently refuses his instruction of "a bun and some fruit" for breakfast.<sup>675</sup> Arguably, and somewhat ironically, by turning to Woolf's autobiographical writings one can readily call into question the biographical inaccuracy Nicolson is (falsely) accusing the (fictional) film of. In addition, Nicolson bemoans the absence of Woolf's ability to behave "suddenly and intimately with great warmth and tenderness towards children", but surely the scene in which she carefully assists her young niece, Angelica, with the burial of a dead bird is infused with tenderness and warmth.<sup>676</sup> Finally, what Nicolson, and others, seem to forget is this is simply a fictional representation of *one* day in the life of Woolf, a day in which she wrote, or began to write, *Mrs Dalloway*, which was during a period in which she battled her depression.

In her review of the film Hermione Lee asks: "Is moody, suicidal Virginia Woolf too complicated for cinema?"<sup>677</sup> Lee's film review, in contrast to Nicolson who only mentions the existence of a novel from which the film is adapted, both acknowledges and incorporates a discussion of the novel, which she describes as "a bold invention, in which Woolf's presence and writing haunts all three of the intertwined stories".<sup>678</sup> She applauds Cunningham for his portrayal of "what made Woolf's life heroic", which is demonstrable of Woolf's "dedication to her work in the teeth of illness, and her violent swings between moods of pleasure, relish and excitement in life, and abysses of depression and despair" — a central concern of Lee's own biography is Woolf's heroism.<sup>679</sup> Lee expresses her anxiety about reading the fictionalised life of Woolf, finding it difficult to appreciate those invented scenes which she herself cannot conceive of, adding that "the Hare/Daldry film" made such inventions "even more of an irritant".<sup>680</sup> These sentiments are reiterated and expanded in the essay "Virginia Woolf's Nose", which featured in her 2005 book of the same name, in which she exclaims:



For all its polemical earnestness about the mistreatment of mental illness and the constrictions imposed on Virginia Woolf after her breakdown, the film evacuates her life of political intelligence or social acumen, returning her to the position of doomed, fey, mad victim. I wish, for instance, that she could have been seen setting type at the Press alongside Leonard, as she often did, instead of wandering off for gloomily creative walks on Richmond Hill.<sup>681</sup>

As Woolf's biographer one can sympathise with Lee's unease at a fictionalisation of Woolf's life, but why the discrepancy between the novel and film? She is pained by biographical inaccuracies, with how Monk's House is presented it is "too grand: the rooms are too big and well-furnished", and "the servants are too smartly turned out"; that Vanessa is "absurdly posh", that she would dress her daughter in "a cut-down jacket of Duncan Grant's" not a coat from Harrods; and that "Nicole Kidman looks much too young".<sup>682</sup> To give her argument more authority she closes her "Virginia Woolf's Nose" essay with a quotation from another (distant) family member, Vanessa Bell's granddaughter Virginia Nicolson, who "complained bitterly about Kidman's inappropriateness in the part" and, critically, "the absurd representation of Vanessa".<sup>683</sup>

The opening scene and its representation, or version as Silver would argue, of the suicide attracts the strongest condemnation. Nicolson argues it reinforces Woolf's membership in the oft romanticised "Sad Lit Academy": her position amongst "these beautiful tragic writers" is endorsed by her physical appearance when she drowns, since at aged fifty-nine she is no different from "the lovely pure-skinned figure of 20 or 30 years before".<sup>684</sup> This, Nicholson notes, is reinforced by the presentation of the River Ouse, not as "the filthy, angry, mud-smeared Sussex" river that it is, but as some "Arcadian-Elysian sunlit brook, the sort of stream which a writer would obviously be taken to some kind of Lit Valhella".<sup>685</sup> There are many versions re(-)presenting Woolf's suicide, each tweaking the details for their own means: for instance, Quentin Bell's "bright, clear, cold day" becomes "a grey windswept morning" in Tyler's regurgitation of Woolf's life long battle against domestic drudgery.<sup>686</sup> Lee comments:

I wish her suicide hadn't been transformed into a picturesque idyll. Woolf was no Ophelia: she drowned herself on a cold day in March in a dangerous, ugly river where the water flows so fast that nothing grows on its banks. ... When I challenged Stephen Daldry in an interview about his version of the suicide, he responded: 'We only had Kidman for four weeks in June, and we couldn't exactly strip the trees.'<sup>687</sup>



For Lee and Nicolson the beautification of Woolf's death in fiction is a sticking point, for Daldry it is inconsequential, his reply to Lee reverberates with the futility of her challenge.

In an article published in *Time* magazine a little over a fortnight after Woolf's death, and four days before her body was found, the following "version" of her death is proffered:

Perhaps, as she stood beside the Ouse, Virginia Woolf repeated those lines [Shakespeare's "Fear no more the heat o' the sun"] to herself as Clarissa Dalloway had done. Perhaps, in the midst of World War II, she had come to feel as Clarissa Dalloway did after World War I [...] Perhaps, as World War II and the war's changes closed over her, Virginia Woolf came to feel at last like the war-shocked Septimus Smih, whose suicide she had described in *Mrs Dalloway*: "Human nature, in short, was upon him — the repulsive brute with blood-red nostrils ... The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself ... ." <sup>688</sup>

In an adaptation which blurs the boundaries between Woolf's autobiographical, critical and fictional writings, and draws explicitly upon her novel *Mrs Dalloway*, would this "version" not be a more conducive influence than Elysian brooks? Would a representation driven by verisimilitude have been any better, or worse? And how would such an account be judge? By Lee's account, or Bell's? However, reading the scene as an adaptation of Woolf's other writings presents a different, less closed reading is available. Septimus's suicide does not recount the momentary agony of being impaled on a railing. Rachel Vinrace dies a slow and agonising death but Woolf presents an altogether different experience in which Rachel finds peace in an aquatic realm somewhere between life and death. Rachel's experience is not one of febrile convulsions, although this would be the reality of her fatal illness, and critics appreciate this. So why, if inaccuracy is overlooked in Woolf's own writing can an adaptation of Woolf's writing not be afforded the same treatment? Both critics accuse the film of sentimentality, but I would argue that this is a flippant accusation thrown by those who cannot escape the bind of biographical detail and insist on judging the scene as a biopic when, as Nicolson notes, David Hare refused such categorisation, adding that the film therefore "should not be judged on its historical accuracy". <sup>689</sup> As Cunningham, cited by Lee, exclaims: "How dare she, how dare anyone, consider Woolf his or her 'territory'? I know of no other figure who inspires such ferocious possessiveness." <sup>690</sup>



## Reading the Reader Reading Woolf

Adaptation, as a process, positions the acts of reading and of writing side by side as without the former adaptation could not occur: the adapting author must, after all, read the source text before he can write the adaptation. *The Hours* is an adaptation which draws attention to both the writer, through its Mrs. Woolf narrative, and the reader, through the Mrs. Brown narrative. Kristeva's conception of intertextuality argued that textual meaning is born of "a dialogue among several writings" in which the writer, the reader, and each of their socio-cultural contexts intersect.<sup>691</sup> This is acutely illustrated by Lee's admission when critiquing *The Hours*: "My reservations came from a biographer's squeamish reluctance to see a real person made over into a fictional character, with made-up thoughts and speeches."<sup>692</sup> Lee's reading of Cunningham's novel is intersected with her own biographical research into Woolf and, in contrast to a reader who knows little of Woolf, is struck by biographical inaccuracies. Interestingly, if each reader consuming the text brings their own individual context(s) no one reading can ever be the same, and if no one reading can be the same there can be no singular, correct reading. If each adaptation is one writer's reading of a source text then there can be no one faithful, or correct, adaptation as every adaptation will have very different intertexts coming into dialogue. The Mrs Brown narrative illustrates the act of reading and this notion of a dialogue as we perceive her bringing her own texts and contexts to her experience of *Mrs Dalloway*.

Cunningham's *The Hours* is a novel about the power of reading and, specifically, the reading of one novel: Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. Laura Brown is Cunningham's reader and she is reading "all of Virginia Woolf, book by book".<sup>693</sup> We first encounter Laura Brown as she lies in bed reading *Mrs Dalloway*, a luxury afforded the Fifties housewife because she is pregnant with her second child: "In another world, she might have spent her whole life reading. But this is the new world, the rescued world — there's not much room for idleness."<sup>694</sup> Laura, just like Lee, brings her own knowledge of Woolf's life to her experience of reading *Mrs. Dalloway*:



How, Laura wonders, could someone who was able to write a sentence like that — who was able to feel everything contained in a sentence like that — come to kill herself? What in the world is wrong with people? Summoning resolve, as if she were about to dive into cold water, Laura closes the book and lays it on the nightstand.<sup>695</sup>

Cunningham's reference to Woolf's suicide illustrates how a reader merges biography and fiction: Laura's feelings towards her role as housewife and mother are paralleled with those Woolf experiences in the moments before her death, as both women must summon resolve to face what is to come next, whether descending the stairs to a dutiful husband and devoted son, or a river bank to die. Laura's awareness of Woolf's death is presented on the next page where she acknowledges that

she is fascinated by the idea of a woman like that, a woman of such brilliance, such strangeness, such immeasurable sorrow; a woman who had genius but still filled her pocket with a stone and waded out into a river.<sup>696</sup>

Daldry's film furthers this link when depicting Laura's afternoon sojourn to a hotel where she hires a room to both read and to commit suicide. In the scene, a high-angle long shot presents Laura laying back upon the bed, holding her partially exposed pregnant abdomen, as murky brown water rises up from underneath the bed, engulfing it and Laura. The images return us to the opening scenes depicting Woolf's suicide as the water swamping Laura is strewn with the same weeds seen Woolf's underwater flight down stream at the film's opening.

Cunningham also weaves *Mrs Dalloway* into the Mrs Brown narrative: his description of Laura's battle to close the book as if about to dive into cold water echoes Clarissa Dalloway's expression, "What a lark! What a plunge!", quoted a few pages. This allusion to *Mrs Dalloway* invites a reader with a knowledge of *Mrs Dalloway* to draw upon the character of Septimus Smith whose incapacity to feel drives him to kill himself, whose act of suicide returns us to Woolf's suicide which Laura is imagining. However, as Laura Brown is yet to encounter Septimus, this reading would belong to the extradiegetic reader reading the intradiegetic reader reading *Mrs Dalloway*. Laura is not only a fictional illustration of Kristeva's theory of textual meaning being a dialogue between writer, reader, text and context(s), Laura is also part of the reader's textual dialogism as the reader reading Laura in-



troduces additional layers and Laura's dialogue becomes a part of their textual dialogue.

Later in the day, Laura checks herself into a hotel room having deposited her son with a child-minder for a few hours. She does so in a desperate attempt to escape the feelings of entrapment daily life imposes upon her:

Her nervousness along with her anger and disappointment in herself are all perfectly recognizable to her but they now reside elsewhere. The decision to check into this hotel, to rise in the elevator, seems to have rescued her the way morphine rescues a cancer patient, not by eradicating the pain but simply making the pain cease to matter. ... She is so far away from her life. It was so easy.<sup>697</sup>

Daldry's film represents the sudden contrast in Laura's emotions both contrasting visual and aural signifiers in the depiction of her drive to the hotel and her arrival at the hotel, and specifically the moment she settles into the room to read. Laura's journey to the hotel is a dramatic one: the noise of the accelerating car engine is accompanied by rapidly edited shots of her cutting in between other cars on the highway before dramatically cutting across lanes to exit the highway. The editing, whilst not as rapid in other films, is a dramatic contrast to the more leisurely pace of editing used throughout the majority of the film. The pace of the scene, and thus Laura Brown's heightened emotional state, is emphasised through occasional cuts to Richard playing calmly with some building blocks. Interestingly, Richard's play mirrors his mother's narrative: he concentrates hard on building while his mother focuses on her driving; as he pushes a cream toy car around the building he has constructed the film cuts to a shot of his mother's cream car cutting across traffic to reach the hotel's exit off the highway; a distressed Richard suddenly demolishes his building by lifting it whole into the box from which the blocks came as his mother enters the hotel, a juxtaposition that suggests a destructive change to the lives being portrayed and one which furthers the sense that Laura is about to escape her life through suicide. The sense of urgency is heightened by the musical score which is dominated by staccato piano chords overlaying violins repeating the same note with periodic ascensions in pitch; as the scene progresses the speed increases. The musical score and pace of editing immediately calms as Laura enters the hotel reception which is presented visually through a close-up of her feet waking across a marble floor and the noise of the car engine contrasts with the echo of her brisk and deliberate steps across the hotel lobby.



Once in her room the film echoes Cunningham's description of Laura's sense of relief being akin to the relief morphine brings cancer patient: the lighting and the room's decor are subdued compared to Laura's arrival: the neutral beiges of the soft-furnishings and wallpaper alongside the dark wood furniture of the room contrast the vibrant terracotta exterior of the hotel and the day's bright sunlight is dramatically softened by the room's net-curtains. The escape from life is furthered when the scene cuts to a shot of Laura's kitchen and her birthday cake for Dan: the kitchen's blue vinyl chairs, the yellow laminate cupboard doors with their chrome trims and the blue and yellow icing of the cake contrasting the softer hues and woods of the hotel room. In a "room of her own" Laura finds a space where she can leave her life behind her and where she is afforded the luxury of guilt-free reading:

It seems, somehow, that she has left her own world and entered the realm of the book. Nothing, of course, could be further from Mrs. Dalloway's London than this turquoise hotel room, and yet she imagines that Virginia Woolf herself, the drowned woman, the genius, might in death inhabit a place not unlike this one.<sup>698</sup>

Daldry's film does not echo the novel's turquoise hotel room, but it does produce a visual contrast between Laura's world and the room she enters to escape it.

Laura lies on the bed and reads the passages depicting Clarissa's walk along Bond Street contemplating life and death, recalling how she once threw "a sixpence into the Serpentine" and the question of how "the ebb and flow of things" must inevitably, go on without her.<sup>699</sup> Laura's own thoughts interrupt the *Mrs Dalloway* quotation as she, inspired by Clarissa's musings and Woolf's death which, never far from Laura's thoughts, preceded the *Mrs Dalloway* extract. Laura goes on to consider life and death, and her own place in the world: "it is possible to die ... She could decide to die. ... It could, she thinks, be deeply comforting; it might feel so free: to simply go away."<sup>700</sup> Again, Cunningham depicts the reading experience and, in the process, invites his reader into a complex textual discourse incorporating *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Hours*, and Woolf's suicide. Daldry's film similarly emphasises the connection between Laura and Woolf: as I mentioned above, it does so visually by having Laura engulfed in river water; it produces an aural association when, in voice-over, Woolf can be heard reading a passage from the *Mrs Dalloway* novel Laura is reading. The film then cuts to the Mrs Woolf narrative, presenting Virginia, in close-up, lost in thought as she concludes "it is possi-



ble to die." Virginia's sister, Vanessa, asks Virginia what she is thinking about as the film cuts back to Laura's narrative with a close-up shot of the copy of *Mrs Dalloway* she is reading. We then see Laura extract a series of medicine bottles from her bag and lay them on her bed, before she lies down and is engulfed in river water. The film returns to Virginia who explains to her niece, Angelica, that she has decided not to kill her heroine, at which point the film cuts back to Laura Brown suddenly sitting up whilst inhaling sharply, before exclaiming "I can't" then clutching her pregnant belly. The camera pans back as Laura cries to reveal the hotel room with no sign of the water that Laura was previously seen being submerged in. The film cuts back to Virginia telling Angelica "I fear I may have to kill someone else instead." This sequence of events allows the film to imitate Cunningham's novel and represent how the novel *Mrs Dalloway* connects Laura, the reader, and Virginia, the writer, as well as incorporating additional intertextualities such as Woolf's suicide.

Cunningham further complicates the textual dialogue when he alludes to a moment in *Mrs Dalloway* not yet encountered by Laura, or quoted in his novel: Laura, whilst thinking about death and the possibility of her own suicide, addresses herself (and her unborn child), exclaiming aloud "'I would never.' She loves life, loves it hopelessly, at least at certain moments".<sup>701</sup> In this moment Laura is echoing Septimus who, whilst perched on a window ledge prior to jumping to his death, expressed a similar love of life: "he would wait to the very last moment. He did not want to die. Life was good."<sup>702</sup> Whilst Laura is oblivious to the connection, a reader with a prior knowledge of *Mrs Dalloway* would be aware of it and, therefore, the textual association is noted by the reader and not shared by Laura Brown. In addition, Laura then presents the reader with an alternative form of escape to that chosen by Septimus as she goes on to find "comfort in facing the full range of options; in considering all your choices, fearlessly and without guile".<sup>703</sup> And whilst Laura is comforted by the knowledge "that it is possible to stop living" she is drawn back to death as she "imagines Virginia Woolf, virginal, unbalanced, defeated by the impossible demands of life and art, she imagines her stepping into a river with a stone in her pocket", a thought from which she draws comfort in the ease and simplicity of death: "It would be as simple, she thinks, as checking into a hotel. It would be as simple as that."<sup>704</sup> Instead of death, Laura eventually finds another, alternative life to the one she currently lives, yet until this occurs she is



content with the knowledge that she can escape it all through death at any time. Arguably, Laura's textual encounters with Woolf and her suicide provide her with the ability to seek an alternative to death, which can then be read as an augmentation, or even an adaptation, of Septimus's suicide brought about by the influence of the Woolf intertexts.

Cunningham's novel not only represents the reading experience but offers its own reader(s) multiple and various reading experiences as it weaves the lives of the writer, the reader, and the adapted and adapting Clarissas. This is acutely illustrated in the following as Laura's thoughts, whilst driving to collect her son from the child-minder, not only leap between various scenes from *Mrs Dalloway* and her own life, but involve her situating herself in different times and places, and as someone else altogether:

Driving back to Mrs. Latch's house, she is full of what she's read: Clarissa and insane Septimus, the flowers, the party. Images drift through her mind: the figure in the car, the airplane with its message. Laura occupies a twilight zone of sorts; a world composed of London in the twenties, of a turquoise hotel room, and of this car, driving down this familiar street. She is herself and not herself. She is a woman in London, an aristocrat, pale and charming, a little false; she is Virginia Woolf; and she is this other, the inchoate, tumbling thing known as herself, a mother, a driver, a swirling streak of pure life like the Milky Way, a friend of Kitty (whom she's kissed, who may be dying), a pair of hands with coral-coloured fingernails (one chipped) and a diamond wedding band gripping the wheel of a Chevrolet as a pale blue Plymouth taps its brake lights ahead of her, as late-afternoon summer sun assumes its golden depths, as a squirrel dashes across a telephone wire, its tail a pale grey question mark.<sup>705</sup>

This demonstrates how the text being read is woven into the reader's conscious and how it subsequently becomes interwoven with other "texts". Cunningham is not only illustrating the reading experience but elaborating and complicating it as the reader of *The Hours* absorbs Laura Brown's experience of reading *Mrs Dalloway* into their own reading experience which, in turn, interweaves other elements from both *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Hours* alongside anterior texts such as Woolf's biography and cultural iconicity. Daldry's film imitates this, as my earlier analysis demonstrates.



The common reader ... differs from the critic and the scholar. ... He reads for his own pleasure ... he is guided by an instinct to create for himself, out of whatever odds and ends he can come by, some kind of whole — a portrait of a man, a sketch of an age, a theory of the art of writing.

Woolf, "Common Reader"; p. 1.

The only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions. ... To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place upon what we read is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of those sanctuaries. Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions — there we have none.

Woolf, "How One Should Read A Book?"; p. 258.

Virginia Woolf's great novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, is the first great novel I ever read. I read it almost by accident when I was in High School, when I was fifteen years old. I suspect any serious reader has a first great book, just the way anybody has a first kiss. For me it was this book. It stayed with me in a way no other book has. And it felt like something for me to write about very much the way you might write a novel based on the first time you fell in love, the first — your first seminal experience of any kind. This book feels like, I don't know, something that happened to me.

Michael Cunningham, 1999.<sup>706</sup>

Virginia Woolf valued the act of reading, it brought her great pleasure, as Lee notes in the chapter of her biography entitled "Reading": "Reading is often a release or an escape for her. But though it is an addiction, it is not an opiate."<sup>707</sup> Lee continues to explain how Woolf "often writes about the relation between her moods and her readings. One book will suit a certain state of mind"<sup>708</sup> and yet:

"however difficult or painful the book may be, the essential emotion of reading is pleasure. The richest and best way of reading, she maintains in 1918, is to let oneself 'run for pleasure'. A lifetime of reading later, she is still saying much the same thing. 'What a vast fertility of pleasure books hold for me!' she exclaims, blissfully, in 1933."<sup>709</sup>

Alongside writing, reading was also the subject of her critical writing. Whilst working on what was to become *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf was also compiling *The Common Reader*, a collection of essays that included her seminal essay "Modern



Fiction", an essay which Lee perceives as being "as much about reading as writing" arguing that in its original draft, titled "Modern Novels" "it is hard to tell ... whether she is talking about what writers should do, how human beings experience life, or how readers respond to books".<sup>710</sup> Woolf's work on writing and her work on reading draw heavily on the rejection of a contrived, fixed approach to the process: whether capturing the "incessant shower of innumerable atoms"<sup>711</sup> as they fall in her impression-drive approach to writing, or the call for the reader "to follow your own instincts" and "to come to your own conclusions",<sup>712</sup> for Woolf both writing and reading ought to be unfettered and independent experiences. In her diary, commenting on her work for *The Common Reader*, Woolf wrote about the pleasure of working on the collection: "how I enjoy the exercise of my wits upon literature — reading it as literature".<sup>713</sup> Seven years later she published the second volume with the intention that a third volume would follow, but it never materialised. Lee notes of *The Common Reader* that Woolf "wanted to make clear, not so much who she thought her book of essays were for, but how she thought of herself as a reader: non-specialist, adventurous, and open".<sup>714</sup>

In *The Hours* Cunningham returns to the "first great book" he ever read and his novel acknowledges the importance of reading as it dedicates a third of the narrative to the representation of a reader reading. Interestingly, the novel situates the reader alongside the writer (Mrs Woolf) and the character (Mrs Dalloway), suggesting each is as important as the other and echoing Woolf's own concerns — she returned to the subjects of writing and reading, but also to the character of Mrs Dalloway who first appeared in *The Voyage Out*. In "Michael Cunningham Rewriting Woolf: Pragmatist vs. Modernist Aesthetics", Birgit Spengler describes Laura Brown as "Cunningham's exemplary reader", and argues that the character is enacting "Woolf's concept of how one should read a book".<sup>715</sup> Laura Brown, then, may also be read as an adaptation of Woolf's "common reader". Spengler summarises: "Although Mrs Brown's indebtedness to Virginia Woolf is most prominent through her role as reader of *Mrs Dalloway*, her last name emphasizes links to Woolf's essayistic work, in particular to her concepts of fiction and her ideas about women."<sup>716</sup>

When reading Woolf's essays on reading it becomes apparent that she did not conceive of herself as a critic, in fact, she seems to situate herself as an ally of the "common reader", or as Lee describes her approach to reading: "non-



specialist, adventurous, and open".<sup>717</sup> Woolf, in reality, was somehow neither a critic or a common reader, but someone situated somewhere in between. Woolf, like her common reader, read for pleasure and refuted those "heavily furred and gowned" authorities from whose libraries and halls she was denied access. Woolf celebrates an instinctual, liberated approach to reading and rejects the manner in which critics tend to impose their views and reading lists upon readers: "All her life she celebrated the democratic function of the public library as the university of the non-specialist, uninstructed reader; it is the reading room for the common reader."<sup>718</sup> Much like her approach to writing fiction, in which she rejected the preaching of doctrines, her approach to reading is one which values "independence" as "the most important quality that a reader can possess".<sup>719</sup> However, the critic is not without his worth:

they are only able to help us if we come to them laden with questions and suggestions won honestly in the course of our own reading. They can do nothing for us if we herd ourselves under their authority and lie down like sheep in the shade of a hedge. We can only understand their ruling when it comes in conflict with our own and vanquishes it.<sup>720</sup>

In a climate in which the critic is faced with numerous books to read and review in a short space of time it is the reader to whom Woolf turns, demanding "We must remain readers", because it is the reader whose "judgements ... steal into the air, become part of the atmosphere which writers breathe as they work" and an "influence is created which tells upon them even if it never finds its way into print".<sup>721</sup> For Woolf, who "resented the pressures and constrictions of reviewing for money", *The Common Reader* was "a place where she could write about literature to please herself".<sup>722</sup>

Laura Brown as a school girl was continually absorbed by books and referred to as "the bookworm, the foreign-looking one with the dark, close-set eyes and the Roman nose, ... who had always been left alone, to read".<sup>723</sup> But, "Laura Zielski, the solitary girl, the incessant reader, is gone, and here in her place is Laura Brown" who strives for some reading time, a luxury pregnancy permits her.<sup>724</sup> In order to fulfil her desire to read Laura, the housewife and mother, deposits her young son with a childminder before renting a "room of her own" at a hotel where, quite literally in Daldry's film, she is immersed in the myriad impressions formed by her reading. Spengler notes that for Woolf "a good reader has to



fully immerse him- or her- self in a book”, something Cunningham’s novel achieves through the inclusion of lengthy quotation from Woolf’s novel, literally interrupting his own narrative and immersing his reader in his fictional reader’s reading. In Daldry’s film the immersion becomes quite literal as Laura Brown, lying upon the hotel bed, is suddenly consumed by the river water the viewers had seen Woolf drown herself in during the film’s opening scenes. The moment in the film not only demonstrates the reader’s ability to be immersed in what they read, but the multitude of intertextualities that can be interwoven with any one text — in this instance, it is the intersection of biography and cultural iconography. This returns us to another key feature of Woolf’s essays on reading as it foregrounds, in Spengler’s words, “the importance of reading and the reader’s involvement in constituting meaning”.<sup>725</sup> It is through Laura Brown that Cunningham illustrates the “importance of reading” and the role of the reader is illustrated: reading facilitates Laura’s escape from a life from which she draws little pleasure, a life in which she contemplates death as a means of escape. At the close of the narrative when Laura Brown enters the Mrs Dalloway narrative, we learn how she escaped her life as housewife and mother and became a librarian in Toronto. Laura rejects the life imposed upon her in favour of a life of books, reading them and facilitating the reading careers of other readers.

Spengler further develops her reading by aligning Laura with Woolf: “Reading could be an escape and an addiction for Woolf (Lee, *Woolf* 401) and it is certainly both for Laura Brown.”<sup>726</sup> For Spengler:

Woolf’s reading experiences clearly served as a model for Laura Brown’s in *The Hours*. It is no coincidence that in her hotel room, the only place where she can read undisturbed, Laura imagines that Virginia Woolf “the drowned woman, the genius, might in death inhabit a place not unlike this one” (150), i.e. a place where one can go on reading as long as one wishes to.<sup>727</sup>

For Laura death equates to a place where she can read undisturbed and she envisions Woolf’s resting place as a private space, a hotel room, where she too can read for as long as she desires. In renting a room where she can read for as long as she desires, Laura is, in the first instance, enacting the title of Woolf’s seminal feminist text, *A Room Of Her Own*. It is in this “room of her own” that Laura is able to begin the process of freeing herself from the drudgery of her life as mother



and housewife, thus performing a key concern of Woolf's text: female emancipation. In her hotel room Laura is able to, temporarily, kill off Laura Brown, an act which is visualised in Daldry's film as Laura Brown "drowns", immersed in river water. Significantly, it is Laura the reader who kills off Laura the housewife, using the product of her reading, her impressions of Woolf's suicide. For Laura, hers is a metaphorical death but, like the afterlife she imagines for Woolf, "death" affords her the one luxury "life" denies her — a place to read and a life of reading. Laura ultimately "kills" Laura Brown, the mother and housewife, when she emigrates to Canada, a place where she is free to become Laura Brown the librarian, the professional reader. Laura's acts of murder/suicide echo another iconic image from Woolf's essay writing: in "Professions for Women", Woolf discussed "The Angel of the House", a figure "who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her. ... My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not have killed her she would have killed me".<sup>728</sup>

Laura Brown, then, not only illustrates the role of the reader in the construction of textual meaning but introduces another layer to the complex web of intertextuality: Laura Brown both fictionalises Woolf's concept of reading as well as dramatises Woolf's own reading habits. As such, the Mrs Brown narrative draws upon a range of intertexts: theoretical metatexts, biography and autobiography. In doing so, we are introduced to another strand of Woolf's iconicity: Woolf as reader.

Finally, Spengler comments on Cunningham as reader, something I have already touched upon when considering how Cunningham complicates the usual writer/reader dichotomy and, thus, the tendency for adaptation critics to turn to the author and their supposed intentions, as theorised by Elliott's psychic concept of adaptation. Cunningham as literary adapter is both reader and writer, and as such firmly cements the role of the reader and its importance in the construction of reading. Spengler notes:

As much as Laura Brown, Cunningham fashions himself as Woolf's ideal reader: He has read *Mrs Dalloway*, let "the dust of reading" settle and conceived of the novel in a new shape. Whereas Laura's thoughts and her subsequent reactions manifest her dialogic involvement with *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Hours* is Cunningham's attempt at dialogue with Woolf and *Mrs*



*Dalloway*, the evidence of his ongoing debate and involvement with a book he first read as a teenager.<sup>729</sup>

This returns us to Kristeva who, drawing upon Bakhtin, conceptualised intertextuality as a dialogue between texts and contexts, as well as between reader and writer. And, again, Spengler, quoting Lee, demonstrates how this connects back to Woolf:

The *Hours* constitutes an act of writer-response that relies on Woolf's understanding of the reading and her notions that "the most successful reading is when, as we finish the book, we feel that 'it leaves us with the impulse to write it all over again'".<sup>730</sup>

Cunningham, therefore, has positioned himself as a successful reader and, one could argue, provided Woolf with a great compliment as it is her writing that has procured this reading success. One can, should one so desire, read *The Hours* as Cunningham's own experience as a reader, an illustration of his own intertextual dialogue with both *Mrs. Dalloway* and Virginia Woolf. Or, to avoid the murky waters of authorial intention, content ourselves with the fact that *The Hours* firmly evidences adaptation as a layered dialogue which continuously weaves additional textual strands together into a multiple (and never-ending) dialogue between each new reader, contexts, texts, and writer(s).

### **Queering *Mrs Dalloway*: *The Hours* and the 'decade of Clarissa as lesbian'**

Clarissa Vaughan is Cunningham's adaptation of Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway, as indicated by his naming her narrative as "Mrs Dalloway". She is christened "Mrs Dalloway" by Richard Brown: "a conceit tossed off one drunken dormitory night" whilst at university, when he declared she ought to "be named after a great figure in literature" and fate, he declared, dictated it to be Clarissa Dalloway as "she was destined to charm, to prosper."<sup>731</sup> Clarissa, a literary editor in 1990's New York, is mother to Julia and partner to long-term lover Sally with whom she resides. Cunningham transforms Clarissa's marriage to Richard Dalloway into a long-term lesbian relationship with Sally, a relationship which, like Woolf's, has produced a daughter in early adulthood. Thus, Cunningham's adaptation appears to be fulfilling Laura Smith's description of the 1990s being the "decade of Clarissa as lesbian" in her article summarising literary criticism of *Mrs Dalloway* since its publication.<sup>732</sup>



In chapter three I discussed the increasing persistence within literary criticism to fix Clarissa's sexuality, specifically her suppressed homosexuality. I noted how Smith considered the influence of the socio-political upon the literary criticism and how "the way the historical moment affects literary criticism ... allows [critical readers] to situate their own politics of reading within a complex history".<sup>733</sup> *The Hours* illustrates Smith's argument as Cunningham's position as both a critical reader and a homosexual, arguably, emerge through his (re-)reading of *Mrs Dalloway*. Cunningham, born in 1952, attended both Stanford University and the University of Iowa during a period when there was an increasing interest in homosexuality in Woolf's fiction and life, as well as in literary and cultural theory as a whole.<sup>734</sup> It was also a period during which the Gay Rights movement became more active and more prominent in mainstream society and culture. *The Hours* reflects the convergence of literary criticism and biography with queer culture and its ever-increasing presence in mainstream society, as experienced by Cunningham. Cunningham's adaptation, or his "queering", of Clarissa Dalloway can be understood as having been influenced by both his socio-political and intertextual experiences as, in the decade in which Clarissa Dalloway was decidedly "outed" by literary critics, he produces an adaptation which represents, unequivocally, Clarissa as lesbian.

For Kamilla Elliott, Cunningham's "queering" of *Mrs Dalloway* would be read as an example of the "trumping concept of adaptation", and those Woolf critics who strive to qualify Clarissa's sexuality as exclusively homosexual, suppressed or otherwise, would no doubt agree. Elliott's "trumping" concept, as I noted in chapter one, asks "What's wrong with the original?" and then seeks to rectify what the "novel 'meant to' or 'tried to' or 'should have' represented".<sup>735</sup> In this instance, Cunningham's adaptation represents Clarissa Dalloway's sexuality as either Woolf "should have", or how it was "meant to" have been represented had it not been suppressed by socio-political convention. The latter returns us to Emily Jensen's essay "Clarissa Dalloway's Respectable Suicide", discussed in chapter three, in which she argued: "Clarissa more obviously denies her love for Sally Seton, accepting conventional heterosexual life as all that is possible for her".<sup>736</sup> Cunningham's novel "trumps" this by having Clarissa choose homosexual love over a heterosexual one, with Richard. Elliott discusses Patricia Rozema's adaptation of *Mansfield Park*, which, she argues, added "feminist postcolonial critique of slav-



ery" to Austen's novel which function as "a correction of the author's psychology and ideology".<sup>737</sup> Cunningham's adaptation, therefore, "corrects" the sexual politics of Woolf's novel in the sense that he "trumps", or makes explicit, the anachronistic homosexual undercurrents of *Mrs Dalloway*. Interestingly, if, as I shall discuss below, one celebrates Woolf's ambivalent representation of Clarissa's sexuality rather than seeing it as an anachronistic flaw or an example of Woolf's discomfort with (her own) homosexuality, then it is more difficult to determine Cunningham's adaptation as "trumping" Woolf's original — something which, perhaps, sits comfortably with the celebration of ambiguity and rejection of ascribing categories I perceive in Woolf's text.

Of particular interest is how Cunningham's "queering" of Clarissa Dalloway is not as simple as it initially appears. Firstly, he transforms the youthful kiss between Clarissa and Sally, described by Clarissa as "the most exquisite moment of her life",<sup>738</sup> into a heterosexual kiss which led to a summer tryst with Richard who Clarissa shared with "Louis the farm-boy fantasy, the living embodiment of lazy-eyed carnality".<sup>739</sup> The moment between Woolf's Clarissa and Sally remains a moment, interrupted by Peter, that is then lost to history as Clarissa accepts Richard Dalloway's hand in marriage. This moment, as I discussed in chapter three, is often interpreted as the instance in which Clarissa's homosexuality is snuffed out by patriarchal society, although there are alternative readings such as Wolfe's which highlight the fluidity of the moment. In *The Hours*, the moment between Clarissa and Richard goes unbroken and is allowed to run its course, until Clarissa prevented any future relationship when she rejected Richard. Clarissa, having "often ... wondered what might have happened if she'd tried to remain with him", acknowledges that "It is impossible not to imagine that other future, that rejected future" in which "she could, she thinks, have entered another world. She could have had a life as potent and dangerous as literature itself".<sup>740</sup> Such a thought could be applied to Clarissa Dalloway's repeated returns to that summer in Bourton which I discussed in chapter three — momentary contemplations of an other future, one of danger and uncertainty, with the most obvious being a future not with Sally, but with Peter, of whom she recalls: "Now I remember how impossible it was ever to make up my mind — and why did I make up my mind — not to marry him, she wondered, that awful summer?"<sup>741</sup> The contemplation continues, the moment is recollected in full, and a conclusion is reached:



Still, there is this sense of missed opportunity. Maybe there is nothing, ever, that can equal the recollection of having been young together. Maybe it's as simple as that. Richard was the person Clarissa loved at her most optimistic moment. Richard had stood beside her at a pond's edge at dusk, wearing cut-off jeans and rubber sandals. Richard had called her Mrs. Dalloway and they had kissed. His mouth had opened into hers; his tongue (exciting and utterly familiar, she'd never forget it) had worked its way shyly inside until she met it with her own. They'd kissed, and walked around the pond together. In another hour they'd have dinner, and considerable quantities of wine. Clarissa's copy of *The Golden Notebook* lay on the chipped white nightstand in the attic bedroom where she still slept alone; where Richard had not yet begun to spend alternate nights.

It had seemed like the beginning of happiness, and Clarissa is still sometimes shocked, more than thirty years later, to realize that it was happiness; that the entire experience lay in a kiss and a walk, the anticipation of dinner and a book. The dinner is by now forgotten; Lessing has been long overshadowed by other writers; and even the sex, once she and Richard reached that point, was ardent but awkward, unsatisfying, more kindly than passionate. What lives undiminished in Clarissa's mind more than three decades later is a kiss at dusk on a patch of dead grass, and a walk around a pond as mosquitoes droned in the darkening air. There is still that singular perfection, and it's perfect in part because it seemed, at the time, to promise more. Now she knows. That was the moment, right then. There has been no other.<sup>742</sup>

Like her nominal counterpart, "she had never been so happy",<sup>743</sup> and it is this happiness that is celebrated. It is not important that the subsequent tryst was flawed, the sex unsatisfying, what remains, in spite of it all, is its "perfection", is the "promise" of something more that only youthful optimism can allow. The same can be said, and should be said, of the kiss between Sally and Clarissa and their "infinitely precious" moment, but this gets lost somehow, overshadowed by the sense of brutality generated by the interruption. What remains, of Bourton and of Wellfleet, is the importance of youthful optimism, of possibilities, and the promise of something more.

For Clarissa, then, what is of significance is the impression and emotional experience of the event and not the event itself. This echoes Woolf's critical writing on "modern fiction" and her rejection of the definitive in favour of capturing the ambivalence and ambiguity of human character. In chapter three I turned to Jesse Wolfe's exploration of Woolf's "ambivalent portrayal" of Clarissa's marriage and sexuality, as the essay marked a critical departure from other critical works which determined to fix Clarissa's sexuality.<sup>744</sup> This refusal to fix Clarissa's (ho-



mo)sexuality is, as I discussed, a significant echo of Woolf's own intentions for writing fiction — whether a refutation of the Materialist determination to ascribe meaning to worn gloves, or a conscious effort to self-censor the biographical elements of her work, Woolf was determined to extricate exactly what those other critics repeatedly return to, whereas Wolfe's work marks a return to celebrating what Woolf herself celebrated in fiction: "it is the task of the novelist to convey this varying, unknown and uncircumscribed spirit".<sup>745</sup> Cunningham has, on the surface, "queered" Woolf's character, yet he has maintained Woolf's rejection of categorical definition and labelling by complicating Clarissa's homosexuality, most notably through the character's conflict with her daughter's friend, militant lesbian Mary Krull.

Mary Krull is introduced to the narrative through Clarissa's daughter, Julia, and functions as an adaptation of Miss Kilman where religion has been transformed into gay rights. Clarissa and Mary meet briefly in the hallway of Clarissa's apartment when Julia returns to retrieve her backpack. Initially, Mary waits outside under the pretence of needing a cigarette but enters the apartment upon Clarissa's polite invitation. The pair's disdain saturates the scene, in which focalization fluctuates between the two. Clarissa is threatened by Mary's relationship with her daughter, and allows this to colour her judgement:

Here, then, once again, is Mary — Mary the stern and rigorous, Mary the righteous, shaved head beginning to show dark stubble, wearing rat-colored slacks, breasts dangling (she must be past forty) under a ragged white tank top. Here is her heavy tread; here are her knowing, suspicious eyes. Seeing Julia and Mary together, Clarissa thinks of a little girl dragging home a stray dog, all ribs and discolored teeth; a pathetic and ultimately dangerous creature who ostensibly needs a good home but whose hunger in fact runs so deep it cannot be touched by any display of love or bounty. The dog will just keep eating and eating. It will never be satisfied; it will never be tame.<sup>746</sup>

She resents Mary's inability to adhere to social convention, to be polite: "why shouldn't Mary be held to a few of the fundamental human decencies? You don't wait outside somebody's apartment, no matter how brilliant and furious you are. You enter, and say hello. You get through it."<sup>747</sup> In return, Mary despises the manner in which Clarissa clings to conventions of mainstream society:



*"Fool, Mary Krull thinks. Smug, self-satisfied witch.*

She corrects herself. Clarissa Vaughan is not the enemy. Clarissa Vaughan is only deluded, neither more nor less than that. She believes that by obeying the rules she can have what men have. She's bought the ticket. It isn't her fault.<sup>748</sup>

Mary's disdain is coloured by her sexual politics, she is frustrated by Clarissa's desire to be accepted when she herself strives to celebrate difference:

Anything's better than queers of the old-school, dressed to pass, bourgeois to the bone, living like husband and wife. Better to be a frank and open ass-hole, better to be John fucking Wayne, than a well-dressed dyke with a respectable job.<sup>749</sup>

For Mary, Clarissa's lifestyle compromises her homosexuality and whilst she corrects herself for constructing Clarissa as the enemy, "It isn't her fault", she still cannot escape her political militancy: "Mary would like to grab Clarissa's shirt-front and cry out, *You honestly believe that if they come to round up the deviants, they won't stop at your door, don't you? You really are that foolish.*"<sup>750</sup>

Mary, however, is not the only character to question Clarissa's lifestyle, most notably her "marriage" to Sally, although she is the most polemic in her opinion. In the opening chapter of Cunningham's "Mrs Dalloway" Clarissa encounters Walter Hardy in Washington Square Park where she turns her cheek to receive his kiss, a conservative act which reminds her of an observation Richard made thirty years earlier: "that under her private-girl veneer lay all the makings of a good suburban wife."<sup>751</sup> A little later she recollects a more recent critique of his, noting that he "never fully abandoned the notion that Clarissa's decision to live with Sally represents, if not some workaday manifestation of deep corruption, at least a weakness on her part".<sup>752</sup> Another character echoes Richard's sentiments that, much to Mary's horror, Clarissa "has, at heart, become a society wife".<sup>753</sup> Louis Waters, Richard's other lover during the period of his and Clarissa's romance, perceives that "Sally and Clarissa live in the perfect replica of an upper-class West Village apartment", a contrived check-list of objects to showcase their lives.<sup>754</sup> Clarissa's and Sally's lesbian relationship attracts criticism for its supposed imitation of a conventional, society, heterosexual marriage — a marriage, one may argue, reminiscent of Clarissa and Richard Dalloway. These criticisms seemingly situate Clarissa at odds with members of the gay community and, like her Woolfian predecessor, she is positioned as an outsider of the society she inhabits.



However, this reading is further complicated when one considers that two of the three aforementioned critiques of Clarissa are coloured by the characters' personal opinions. Richard was rejected by Clarissa, she refused to return his kiss and in doing so "had put an end to their little experiment, for Clarissa wanted her freedom and Richard wanted, well, too much, didn't he always?"<sup>755</sup> Richard, like Peter Walsh, resents the fact that Clarissa has chosen to spend her life with someone who represents "some sort of banal safe haven" and it is this, not the sexual politics of resembling a "society wife", that drives his disdain.<sup>756</sup> Mary Krull, "a queer theorist" who lectures "passionately at NYU about the sorry masquerade known as gender" and is "too despotic in her intellectual moral intensity", may have all the appearance of having genuine political concerns regarding the nature of Clarissa's lifestyle choices, but her politics are ultimately undermined by her characterisation and her personal relationship with Clarissa's daughter Julia. Mary Krull, the impoverished, gay rights activist, is at odds with the other characters in the novel: her "shaved head" and "breasts dangling (she must be past forty) under a ragged white tank top"; her inability to buy a new pair of boots on her own, alongside her aggressive language, all differentiate her from the novel's other characters.<sup>757</sup> Tory Young comments on Krull's position as an outsider, suggesting that her "politics of public sexual identity and a censorious hostility to the mainstream" are "outmoded in the New York society Cunningham depicts".<sup>758</sup> Clarissa echoes Young's observations when she compares Krull to the heterosexual men she despises: "just that aggressive, just that self-aggrandizing".<sup>759</sup> It is Clarissa's subsequent accusation of Mary being "a conquistador", followed by the revelation of Mary's adoration of Julia at the close of the chapter that exposes the emotion driving Mary's supposed political criticism: "Mary lingers for a moment behind Julia, allowing herself a view of Julia's broad, graceful back, the twin moons of her ass. ... She believes she has never seen anything so beautiful. *If you could love me*, she thinks, *I'd do anything*."<sup>760</sup> Cunningham's final representation of Mary generates a lasting impression of an aggressive, sexually frustrated lesbian which undermines the "outmoded" politics she stands for and, thus, Clarissa's relationship and own sexual politics become less questionable.

Significantly, then, Clarissa's homosexuality and sexual politics are not brought under question and those conflicts surrounding her are not associated with her sexuality, but something other. Cunningham's lesbian Clarissa is still at



odds with the social circles she occupies and her anxieties remain. Clarissa still dwells on the past, yet there seems to be little critical concern with her rejection of a heterosexual romance. Both Clarissa Dalloway and Clarissa Vaughan recollect a kiss from their youth, and both contemplate an alternative life with an alternate partner, one more dangerous than the stable companion they settled with. Clarissa Vaughan's anxieties, like those of Clarissa Dalloway, do not stem from a deep-seated sense of remorse or loss regarding her kiss with Richard; rather there is a persistent sense of relief, that somehow, in rejecting Richard, she has saved herself from a life which would have been far too "potent" and "dangerous". And, finally, both Clarissas are a little too concerned with convention and can both be regarded, perhaps, as a little "too tinselly". In "queering" Clarissa Dalloway and having those conflicts and anxieties remain, Cunningham's novel invites its readers into an interesting intertextual dialogue with the literary criticism which surrounds Woolf's novel. On one hand the adaptation can be seen to be influenced by the literary criticism, to be born of it so to speak, in that Cunningham's novel represents what, arguably, Woolf's did, or could, not; and yet, on the other hand, it is presenting a counter-argument to those critics who seek to fix Clarissa's suppressed lesbianism as the root of all her problems — even as lesbian, Clarissa Vaughan's experience closely mirrors that of Clarissa Dalloway.

## **Conclusion**

In this, my final chapter, I have demonstrated how a return to the source novel opens the study of adaptation to a multitude of potential readings and allows us to introduce a range of intertexts which would otherwise be negated had the source and its author been negated. This chapter has proved the merits of analysing an adaptation's relationship with its source text and its many intertexts, whether the more traditional intertexts such as other works of fiction, metatexts such as literary criticism, or those other texts, less traditional in form, such as the figure of the hysteric or the various cultural icons of Virginia Woolf. In essence, this chapter is the culmination of the previous chapters and its conclusion, the conclusion for the thesis as a whole.



I opened this final chapter with an examination of Virginia Woolf's cultural iconicity, presenting a non-traditional intertext which produced the added complexity of having multiple and conflicting facets. The Woolf icons, or versions as Silver denotes them, variously and simultaneously draw upon contrasting elements of Woolf such as her hysteria, her writing, her politics, and her personal life, such as her sexuality. These icons, Silver argued, influenced the manner in which Woolf and her works are perceived prior to their being read or experienced. Of particular note for this study was the impact of Woolf's "madness", something which returned us to the figure of the hysteric in chapter three. I went on to explore the impact of biography, exploring the contrasting "versions" of Woolf perpetuated by two leading biographers: Quentin Bell, Woolf's nephew, promoted an image of Woolf in which her hysteria dominated and she was figured as an embarrassing inconvenience to her "hero" of a husband, Leonard Woolf; in contrast, Hermione Lee presented a image of Woolf as a heroine whose battles with her illness did not prevent her being professionally successful. For the purposes of this study it was necessary to highlight the lack of a single source when examining Cunningham's Mrs Woolf narrative — the biographical and iconic elements surrounding her life presented such conflicts and confusion that it reiterated the futility of privileging a single text, of presenting one as "Truth", as discussed in chapter one. However, the very existence of such conflicts introduces additional discourses surrounding the adaptation, its source and intertexts, inviting the reader to engage with and/or return to a vast array of texts associated with *The Hours* and its representation of Woolf. These conflicts were explored in my discussion of the contrasting critical receptions of the novel and the film.

In my detailed analysis of the scenes depicting Woolf's suicide in both the novel and the film I was able to demonstrate the significance of stylistic imitation in adaptation. By exploring a stylistic relationship with the source I was able to consider *The Hours* as an adaptation of *Mrs Dalloway* both in its literary and filmic media. In addition, my analysis of the adaptation(s) relationship with Woolf's writing introduced intertextual relationships with other Woolf texts. I was able to produce a comparative analysis with scenes from Woolf's *The Waves* and *The Voyage Out*, the former having also been referenced in the first *Mrs Dalloway* adaptation to be examined in this thesis, *Ten Great Writers* — this emphasised the importance of my web analogy which, in contrast to more linear approaches, al-



lows us to consider additional, more peripheral, intertextual associations between adaptations.

I turned to the Mrs Brown narrative to consider the role of the reader, discussing how Cunningham represents the act of reading and foregrounds the influence of anterior texts upon the reading experience — as illustrated through Laura Brown's contemplations of Woolf's suicide which interrupt her reading of *Mrs Dalloway*. An analysis of Daldry's depiction of Laura's afternoon sojourn to a hotel demonstrated how a film could employ visual and aural signifiers to the same effect as Cunningham's more literal interjections. Significantly, Daldry's "flooding" of the hotel room also returned us to Woolf's impression-driven style of narration, once again demonstrating the bond between style and intertextuality in adaptation as well as the relevance of applying a web-like approach to the textual relationships operating across and between adaptation(s) and intertexts. Laura Brown also returns us to a selection of Woolfian intertexts, notably her critical writing on the theories of reading. I noted Spengler's comments on Cunningham presenting himself as Woolf's ideal reader, an argument that returns us to the dialogic nature of adaptation and the adapting writer's stance as a "reader-writer".

*The Hours* as a textual dialogue is foregrounded in the chapter's final sections discussing the Mrs Dalloway narrative and its "queering" of Clarissa. Quoting Laura Smith who exclaimed the 1990s were the decade in which "Clarissa is lesbian", I explored Cunningham's adaptation of Woolf's narrative paying particular attention to its treatment of sexuality. I exposed the fallacy of critical attempts to fix Clarissa Dalloway's sexuality in chapter three, and demonstrated how Cunningham's adaptation was more complicated than a simple "queering" of Woolf's heroine. I highlighted how *The Hours*, like *Mrs Dalloway*, celebrated ambiguity as the conflicts arising in the narrative were no different in spite of the sexual liberation so to speak, that Clarissa Vaughan was as much at odds with the world she inhabited as her Woolfian predecessor. I also illustrated how *The Hours* invites the reader to return to Woolf's novel and engage with the questions of (homo)sexuality that have dominated the last couple of decades of literary criticism, or rather to re-consider the desire to label Clarissa as a lesbian. In doing so, *The Hours* maintains a dialogue with its intertexts, it demands the reader return to the source, to the critical intertexts, and re-interrogate them with new questions.



*The Hours* not only demonstrates the importance of the source text to adaptation, it foregrounds its significance through its attention to style and its incorporation of source-related intertextuality. As I illustrated in chapter four, an adaptation does not rely solely upon transference of narrative to develop its relationship to its source, rather, as I discuss of *The Hours*, the strongest association comes through stylistic imitation — the narrative components are only present in one of the three stories that construct Cunningham's novel, yet the stylistic relationship is evident in all three. My detailed analysis of the stylistic imitation in Cunningham's prologue, the scene depicting Woolf's suicide, highlights the degree to which it occurs in the novel, and subsequently, in its film adaptation. In doing so this study was able to expose the pitfalls of an alternative textual fidelity, a fidelity to biography and historical accuracy, yet foreground how fidelity is still of use to adaptation criticism. *The Hours* is an acute illustration of how the roles of the source and of intertextuality are intrinsically woven together within adaptation, and how the negation of one dramatically closes down any reading of adaptation.



# Conclusion

In this thesis I have determined to reclaim the source novel and its place within adaptation studies, marking a potentially controversial return to the question of fidelity. This is not to say that this thesis asks for a return of those logophilic-iconophobic attitudes that contributed so heavily to a rejection of fidelity and a negation of the source text in adaptation, far from it. Instead it investigates new ways of addressing fidelity that are not dominated by issues of reproduction which, as medium-specificity foregrounds, is impossible. Fidelity, whilst somewhat of a “dirty” word within adaptation studies, draws our attention to issues fundamental to adaptation and invites us to ask new, exciting and interesting questions of the relationship that distinguishes an adaptation from other texts: the one that occurs between the adaptation and its source text. For instance, asking *how* does the adaptation relate to its source text facilitates the potential for readings to examine more than what is or isn’t reproduced. I achieved this by considering how the adaptations analysed developed a stylistic relationship with their source text, a move which enabled me to not only move beyond those prejudices and problems outlined in chapter one but also helped explode the myth of adapting “impossible novels”, such as Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*.

In order to foreground the importance of the source novel to adaptation studies and reclaim the issue of fidelity it was necessary to recognise how its role, and presence, in adaptation differed from that of other intertexts. I chose to illustrate the importance of the source text by focusing my study upon the adaptations of just one novel, Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. As I outlined in chapter one, the source text’s relationship to the adaptation is that which defines it as an adaptation — any film may have a range of intertexts, but only adaptation has a source from which it is adapted. I further advocated my reclamation of the source text by foregrounding the role the source plays in intertextuality, choosing to focus my study of intertextuality upon those intertexts associated with the source novel: I highlighted the presence of other Woolf-authored texts, both fictional and critical, as well as biographical and autobiographical texts. Many of these texts featured in more than one adaptation, further highlighting the importance of reclaiming the source text — Woolf’s *The Waves* features intertextually in *Ten Great Writers*, where it is



quoted directly, and in *The Hours* where its presence is detected in the imagery adopted by Cunningham in the prologue.

In addition to focusing upon source-related intertexts, this thesis explored less conventional intertexts such as personae, the cultural icon and the figure of the hysteric. In the opening chapter I discussed the figure of Eileen Atkins, an actress who is well-known for her Woolf affiliation having played her on stage and screen, as well as adapted Woolf's work — she adapted the correspondence between Woolf and Vita Sackville-West into a play and wrote the screenplay for Gorris's film adaptation, *Mrs Dalloway*. Atkins's association with Woolf is such that she was granted a well-publicised cameo in Daldry's *The Hours*, playing the florist serving Clarissa Vaughan. Woolf's biographer, Hermione Lee, presents another personae operating intertextually across the adaptations: she featured in *Ten Great Writers*, providing the documentary with an authoritative, anchoring narration and her biography is cited by Cunningham in his list of sources. Lee, as I discussed in chapter five, had a prominent role in the critical reception of the novel and, more notably, Daldry's film adaptation — a role which is also associated with the second point above, the cultural icon.

This thesis introduces the cultural icon to the study of intertextuality in adaptation, drawing upon two separate yet intertwined cultural icons: the icon(s) of Virginia Woolf, as outlined in chapter five, and the figure of the hysteric, introduced in chapter three. *The Hours*, as I discussed, plays out how the Woolf icon(s) often come into conflict as, for instance, Woolf the hysteric contradicts the image of Woolf as a prolific and successful writer. The representation of Woolf's hysteria is the prime concern in my discussion of her cultural iconicity, an issue that returned us to the contradictory biographies of Woolf written by Bell and Lee, and brought to the fore the adaptation's representation of the figure of the hysteric.

The figure of the hysteric plays a critical part in my study, binding two critical strands: it has a central role in the Septimus Smith narrative in *Mrs Dalloway*, and influences the construction of Woolf's cultural iconicity. Woolf's own mental ill-health, her hysteria as it were, contributes to her cultural iconicity and is variously celebrated or vilified, as demonstrated by the conflicting impressions generated by two of her leading biographers, Bell and Lee. In addition, it is present in Nicolson's discussion of Daldry's *The Hours*, demonstrating how the figure of the



hysteric influences the construction of Woolf's cultural persona, or icon(s), and how it may be variously and contradictorily received. *The Hours's* portrayal of Woolf's hysteria and her suicide became the focus of much of the critical discourse surrounding the film adaptation, illustrating how fidelity is very much a presence in discussions of adaptation. Woolf's "mad" icon provided this study with a means of demonstrating how fidelity to one element of an adaptation's intertextuality can blinker a discussion of another form of fidelity and in doing so demonstrated the existence of a multitude of fidelities. This, in turn, allowed me to expose the fallacy of an ill-conceived fidelity ideology through a developed discussion of another type of fidelity: Nicolson and Lee both failed to look beyond fidelity to biographical accuracy in a fictional portrayal of a figure who continually eludes being fixed into a singular, contained image or icon. My own discussion of fidelity to Woolf's writing did not fall victim to the fallacy of reproducing an "original" that does not and cannot exist.

In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf employed the figure of the hysteric as a thematic deconstruction of the phallogentric society she deplored, as I discussed in chapter three. In chapter four I focused upon the adaptation of the Septimus narrative to illustrate how Gorris's film developed a relationship with its source: a key element being how the film imitated the novel's narration in its representation of Septimus's hysteria, employing a multitude of verbal (and non-verbal), visual and aural signifiers in both an extradiegetic and an intradiegetic function to both represent Septimus's hysteria and represent the hysteric's experience of the world he inhabited — an altogether different experience to that of the other characters, as was foregrounded in the Regent's Park scenes. It was necessary to demonstrate the range of signifiers employed by Gorris in order to foreground this study's reclamation of source-adaptation relationship and how a return to the issue of fidelity does not entail a resurfacing of age-old prejudices and closed readings. My analysis of Gorris's adaptation of Septimus illustrates how we can use stylistic imitation to explore fidelity in a manner which neither privileges the original nor demands its "impossible" reproduction. Rather, it celebrates film's ability to use its multiple-signifiers to imitate and adapt a purportedly complex and un-adaptable literary narration — a form of fidelity criticism that privileges rather than denounces similarity through difference.



Stylistic imitation is a key proponent of this thesis's reclamation of the source and it is essential in differentiating its return to fidelity from that earlier form of fidelity criticism which proved so detrimental to adaptation criticism it was heavily criticised and abandoned. Critically, McFarlane instigated a new means of approaching fidelity when he introduced the idea of distinguishing between what may be transposed from one medium to another, transference, and what must be altered, adaptation proper. It was his concept of adaptation proper and finding equivalences for the wholly verbal forms of narration in literature in the multiple signifying system of film narration that I sought to develop through Genette's notion of stylistic imitation. McFarlane's theory of adaptation proper considered how the film medium employed equivalences for literary modes of narration, yet his narratological approach did not consider how a novel's rhetorical style, such as Woolf's impressionism, may be transposed to the adaptation. Employing stylistic imitation I have discussed *how* the adaptations by Gorris, Cunningham and Daldry have all, in their different ways, promoted a stylistic relationship with Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. Gorris, for instance, employed the film's soundtrack to develop a relationship with *Mrs Dalloway's* impressionistic style: the audience were privy to Septimus's hysteria as, in the Regent's Park scene, they heard the sounds of exploding bombs, the noise of pigeons cooing obliterated the sound of the skywriter's engines to portray how Septimus's experience of the world was at odds to those around him; and, during his suicide, the extradiegetic orchestral score mirrored the on-screen performance as a jarring, chaotic layering of instruments calmed alongside Septimus. In addition, the film employed visual and aural edits, framing (visual), voice-over, and performance, to adapt the rhetorical style of the novel.

Cunningham's literary novel offered other means of analysing an adaptation's stylistic relationship with its source, most notably that of source-affiliated intertextuality. Cunningham's prologue presented a fictional account of Woolf's suicide which, instead of employing fidelity to biographical detail, demonstrated an intertextual relationship with a number of Woolf-authored texts, featuring, for example, imagery from her novels *The Voyage Out* and *The Waves*. Daldry's film maintained Cunningham's rejection of biographical fidelity in favour of adapting the literary stylistic imitation to film and similarly developing a stylistic relationship with Woolf's writing. The Mrs Brown strand of the narrative foregrounded an-



other element of how source-based intertextuality can develop a relationship between source and adaptation. I chose to read the character of Laura Brown as an adaptation of Woolf's critical writings on the art of reading, arguing that Laura Brown was a fictional adaptation of Woolf's "Common Reader". Whilst not intrinsically linked to style, this element of the adaptation's intertextuality foregrounds the importance of Woolf's writing to *The Hours* and highlights how the presence of the source author does not, necessarily, cast an all-consuming shadow over adaptation that returns us to past prejudices associated with fidelity. Rather, I illustrated how the source author can open up adaptation to an array of new and unlimited intertextual readings.

This thesis offers a theoretical means of reclaiming fidelity criticism from its tarnished past by marrying the roles of the source novel and intertextuality. My approach has enabled me to consider both intramedial and intermedial adaptation, as I explored the stylistic relationship between both literary and film adaptations of Woolf's novel. In contrast to McFarlane's theory of adaptation proper, I have been able to negotiate the complications of transmodal transposition without limiting myself to issues associated with medium specificity. I have also introduced new ways of conceiving of intertextuality in adaptation both by focusing upon source-related intertexts, specifically source author associated intertexts, and by looking at non-conventional intertexts such as the cultural icon, which present a fluid, often multi-faceted and contradictory resource. In doing so I have avoided the pitfalls associated with fidelity criticism as my theory affords the adaptation critic the opportunity to consider the many varied and potentially ever-changing readings.



# Appendices

## Appendix A

Virginia Woolf's first suicide note to Leonard Woolf dated 'Tuesday'.

Dearest,  
I feel certain that I am going  
mad again: I feel we cant go  
through another of these terrible times.  
And I shant recover this time. I begin  
to hear voices, and cant concentrate.  
So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have  
given me  
the greatest possible happiness. You  
have been in every way all that anyone  
could be. I dont think two  
people could have been happier till  
this terrible disease came. I cant  
fight it any longer, I know that I am  
spoilng your life, that without me you  
could work. And you will I know.  
You see I cant even write this properly. I  
cant read. What I want to say is that  
I owe all the happiness of my life to you.  
You have been entirely patient with me &  
incredibly good. I want to say that –  
everybody knows it. If anybody could [new page]  
have saved me it would have been you.  
Everything has gone from me but the  
certainty of your goodness. I  
cant go on spoiling your life any longer. I don't think two  
people  
could have been happier than we have been.  
V.

Taken from Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 756 – 7.  
Lee is quoting the original letter held by the British Library, which she notes is also  
available in *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume VI*, Hogarth Press, London, 1980;  
letter 3702, p. 481.

This letter is reproduced in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (6) with one minor  
difference as an apostrophe is inserted into the first 'cant' on the third line.



## Appendix B

Virginia Woolf's second, and undated, note to Leonard written the morning of her suicide and left on her writing block in the lodge.

Dearest,  
I want to tell you that you have  
given me complete happiness. No one  
could have done more than you have done.  
Please believe that.  
But I know that I shall never get over  
this: & I am wasting your life. It is this madness.  
Nothing anyone says can persuade me.  
You can work, & you will be much  
better without me. You see I cant  
write this even, which shows I am right.  
All I want to say is that until this  
disease came on we were perfectly  
happy. It was all due to you.  
No one could have been so good as  
you have been. From the very  
first day till now.  
[She added with fresh ink]: Everyone knows that.  
V.

[Lee notes: "Turning the page, she wrote up the left-hand side:"]

You will find Roger's letters to the Maurons in the  
writing table drawer in the Lodge. Will  
you destroy all my papers.

Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 759 –760.

Lee is citing *Letters Vol VI*, which quotes the letter in print on p. 486-7 and reprints the holograph on p. 489 (which is housed at the British Library).



<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Cinema," in *Collected Papers, Volume Two*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), 268 & 269.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 272.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 270.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 269.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 269-70.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 269-70.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 272.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 270.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in *Collected Essays, Volume Two*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), 106.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 2.

Note: Cardwell's definition is intrinsically linked to her study which focuses on the adaptation of canonical literature to screen.

<sup>11</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006), xi.

<sup>12</sup> See Hutcheon.

It is pertinent to note that many of these computer games are constructed around a narrative of their own into which the audience is actively invited to submerge themselves as they, more often than not, take on the role of the hero(ine).

<sup>13</sup> In explicitly distancing itself from its literary high-brow source, Heckerling's adaptation calls into question the class criticism lauded at the "low-brow" film adaptation. This issue of class has been repeatedly interrogated by adaptation theorists as I shall demonstrate later in this chapter. See also fn 6.

<sup>14</sup> The adaptation of canonical texts into populist films, often specifically the teen-pic genre, has been studied in detail by numerous critics. Shakespeare adaptations have dominated this field of enquiry, for instance, Richard Burt's *Unspeakable ShaXXXspear: Queer Theory and American Kiddie Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1999). In *Adaptations: Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999) there is an engagement with the high/low cultural debate that has become quite predominant in pro-literary criticism of the film adaptation. In her introduction Imelda Whelehan notes how such criticism increasingly "laments the 'dumbing-down'" of canonical literature when it is adapted to screen [18]. The volume includes an essay on *Clueless* as well as essays on *Batman*, thus juxtaposing high/low cultural source texts. One can add to this debate by considering how some source texts are made more culturally credible by their adaptations, for instance, Daniel Clowes' graphic-novel *Ghost World* and his "Art-School Confidential" (a one-off installment later collected in his *Eightball* anthology) have both been adapted to screen by independent director Terry Zwigoff. The supposedly "low-brow" art of the comic is thus elevated to the "high-brow" culture of the art-house film.

<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1975), 220-27.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 22, 223, and 227 respectively.



<sup>17</sup> I would like to explain my use of “source” — it is my intention to suggest a point from which the adaptation emerges (for want of a better word) without, critically, indicating a prioritising of one text over another. For instance, I reject the use of “original” as this has problematic connotations in that the adaptation is subsequently positioned as a copy, and therefore an inferior. Source, for me, indicates the adaptation’s origins, as it were, without connoting any prejudices — the source of a river is no more or less important than any of its other parts; the source of a moment of inspiration is no more or less valuable than that which it inspires. Quite simply, it denotes how one (the adaptation) cannot exist without the other, but, by the same token, they can be experienced separately. This is quite a complex question to grapple with and it is one that I will leave to another, for now, I shall return to the source and the adaptation.

<sup>18</sup> Imelda Whelehan, “Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas” in *Adaptations: Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, eds. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (London: Routledge, 1999), 17.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> John Orr, introduction to *Cinema and Fiction*, eds. John Orr and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Stam, “Introduction: the Theory and Practice of Adaptation” in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Stam discusses a total of eight prejudices which have influenced attitudes towards the film adaptation, these are: anteriority; the “rivalry” between literature and film; iconophobia; logophilia; anti-corporeality; the myth of facility; class prejudice; and parasitism. *ibid.*, 4-7.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Whelehan, “Adaptations”, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>28</sup> In her preface to *Film/Literature/Heritage: A Sight and Sound Reader*, Ginette Vincendeau states: “The book was originally planned as a reader to film and literature, ... [but,] although film and literature remains the basic rationale of this book, a third term was added to its title and contents, to reflect the growing importance of heritage cinema both as a “genre” and as a concept in film studies.” Ginette Vincendeau, *Film/Literature/Heritage: A Sight and Sound Reader* (London: BFI publishing, 2001), ix.

<sup>29</sup> Elliott, *Rethinking*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, 65.

<sup>35</sup> Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 26.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 195.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 184.



<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> His case study of Lean's *Great Expectations* is noted as examining "the possibility of creating a visual style that matches a highly distinctive literary style", but McFarlane's analysis fails to move beyond finding filmic equivalences.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, vii.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, vii.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited*, 42.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 44.

See Cardwell, 43 — 51, for a detailed discussion of medium-specificity and its key theorists (including George Bluestone, often described as the pioneer of the study of film adaptation).

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 52.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> Elliott, *Rethinking*, 150.

<sup>50</sup> Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited*, 69.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 72.

<sup>52</sup> Christine Geraghty, *Now A Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 5.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 51.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 197.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 193.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 197.

<sup>60</sup> Whelehan, "Adaptations", 3.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>62</sup> Esther Sonnet, "From *Emma* to *Clueless*: taste, pleasure and the scene of history", in *Adaptations: Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, eds. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (London: Routledge, 1999), 52.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 60

<sup>64</sup> Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited*, 71.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, 98.



<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, 25.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Stella McNichol, introduction to *Mrs Dalloway's Party* by Virginia Woolf and ed. Stella McNichol (London: Harcourt, 2001), 3.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>74</sup> McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 6.  
Hutcheon uses the phrase "adaptation as adaptation" throughout the study.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, 111.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, xvi.

She also describes it variously as "repetition with variation" (4); "repetition with difference" (142); "repetition with modification" (167).

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, 171.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 172.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 173 & 174 respectively.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 31-2. Hutcheon is referencing Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976/1989).

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 167.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 177.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, 176.

<sup>89</sup> Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1969) in *The Kristeva Reader* ed. Toil Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 37.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, 36.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>92</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997 [1982]), 1.

<sup>93</sup> Gerald Prince, foreword to *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second degree*, by Gérard Genette, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997 [1982]), ix.

<sup>94</sup> Genette, *Palimpsests*, 1.



<sup>95</sup> Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 106.

<sup>96</sup> Genette, *Palimpsests*, 1.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

Virginia Woolf employed paratextuality as a form of commentary: her 1928 novel *Orlando: A Biography* is consciously subversive of biographical writing and the sub-title reinforces the novel's playful concerns. The title of Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* forms a paratextual relationship with the novel it is adapting, adopting an early working title of Woolf's for its own.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

In addition, Genette notes that hypertextuality is "to some degree a universal feature of literacy: [that] there is no literary work that does not evoke (to some extent and according to how it is read) some other literary work, and in that sense all works are hypertextual. But like George Orwell's 'equals,' some works are more so than others." (9) Naturally the film adaptation is just one text that foregrounds (one) of its hypotexts, but what is significant for this study is the additional texts evoked by the film adaptation.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 25. Genette also notes that pastiche and caricature are two forms "that are often hard to distinguish" (30).

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, 163.

Genette notes how the forgery, as continuation, has been described as an act of completion. This sense of the hypertext then completing what the hypotext started is echoed in some adaptation criticism. The notion of the adaptation as "completing" what the novel started is not something I wish to explore here, mainly as on the surface it is simply inverting the logophilic/iconophobic prejudices which currently plague adaptation criticism. I do not see what benefit privileging the film over the novel can have for the study of adaptation, as this study attempts to illustrate, adaptation is about the relationship between the novel, the film adaptation, and, as I shall come to shortly, the additional influential intertexts.

<sup>106</sup> Seymour Chatman, "Mrs Dalloway's Progeny: *The Hours* as Second-degree Narrative" in *A Companion to Narrative Theory* eds. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 270.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, 272.

<sup>108</sup> Genette, *Palimpsests*, 83.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, 85.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>112</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 14.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, 35.

<sup>114</sup> See Hutcheon for a more detailed exploration of the process of creation as, in chapter three, she considers the adapters when asking "Who" adapts and "Why".

<sup>115</sup> Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 115.



<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>120</sup> Elliott, *Rethinking*, 135.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 136.

<sup>123</sup> Neil Sinyard, *Filming Literature: the Art of Screen Adaptation* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1986), 135.

<sup>124</sup> Elliott, *Rethinking*, 136.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, 140.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, 143.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, 150.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, 161.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, 163.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 177.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, 157.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, 157.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, 160.

<sup>136</sup> Taken from my notes. Paper delivered on the 12th September 2006 at the Association of Literature on Screen Inaugural Conference, De Montfort University, Leicester, 11/9/2006-12/9/2006.

<sup>137</sup> McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 127. Whilst McFarlane's study does include an examination of the transference of "psychological patterns" in the *Random Harvest* case study, his discussion of narration does not venture away from a structuralist approach to narration and fails to consider the issue of rhetoric, or style which is something my own study intends to rectify.

<sup>138</sup> It is important to acknowledge that McFarlane preempts criticism regarding the absence of modernist texts from his study, commenting that his study was unable to deal with "every kind of novelistic procedure" and that a "further volume might well focus on ... modernist or post-modernist texts ... such as *Ulysses*, *Orlando*, *Lolita*, and *A Clockwork Orange* ... [which are] outside the range of the present study, in which the focus is on the processes of transposition". McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 33.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, 71.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, 187.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, 192.

<sup>142</sup> Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 24.



<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>144</sup> Melvin Bragg, preface to *The Modern World: Ten Great Writers*, by Malcolm Bradbury (London: Secker and Warburg, 1988), x — xi.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, xi.

<sup>146</sup> Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 162.

<sup>147</sup> Bragg, preface, xiii.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, xi.

<sup>149</sup> In *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality* Richard Kilborn and John Izod comment on the biography documentary: "One of the most popular methods ... is to use traditional documentary means. Friends and relatives will give their memories. Letters ... will be cited. Photographs ... will be shown. ... An equally popular form of television biography involves the mixing of standard documentary techniques with a number of dramatised reconstructions. More often than not, an anchoring narrator figure will again be employed." Richard Kilborn and John Izod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 145.

<sup>150</sup> Both Cardwell and Geraghty note the importance placed on costume and setting to the adaptation of historical dramas. Geraghty dedicates an entire chapter to discussing the role of setting in adaptation, arguing that it introduces a second strand to faithfulness, fidelity to the period as much as fidelity to the novel.

<sup>151</sup> Woolf, *MF*, 106.

<sup>152</sup> Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 3.

<sup>153</sup> *Ten Great Writers* was produced by LWT for Channel 4 and as such had to account for advert breaks which would intersect. The film is, thus, divided into two with, as I noted above, the two sections opening with a quote from *The Waves*. The first section closes with a shot of Monk's House whilst the second section closes with shots of waves accompanied by quotation from Woolf's novel, *The Waves*.

<sup>154</sup> Kilborn and Izod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary*, 145.

<sup>155</sup> Kilborn and Izod note how off-screen narration employed by the documentary is colloquially called "voice-of-god", a disembodied, "knowing voice" whose authority is such that it anchors the documentary's meaning and "eliminates whatever ambiguity might be inherent." *ibid.*, 58 & 56. See also n. 151.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, 59.

They continue to explain how convention instills in us that the voice is a knowing one: "We trust it and take its authority as part of an unspoken contract between ourselves and the documentarists. In addition, we seem psychologically to be disposed to find persuasive the disembodied voice which addresses us while our attention is seized by the images playing, as it were, in the foreground." (59) Whilst the pair are referring specifically to the off-screen commentary it is equally applicable when considering the role of Lee who speaks both off-screen and on-screen, addressing the camera directly and, thus, reinforcing the unspoken bond of trust between her and the viewer.

<sup>157</sup> Although this, as I shall discuss in chapter 2, is continually being questioned, especially by feminist literary criticism.

<sup>158</sup> Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited*, 89.



<sup>159</sup> The socio-political climate from which Modernism emerged was one of great change and one which this list does little justice. There is insufficient room within this study to discuss the impact of such socio-political upheaval, however, where relevant I will discuss the political climate in relation to Woolf's own work. Most notable will be the impact of the First World War and the rise of feminism. It is important to acknowledge that the Women's Suffrage movement had been in operation for many years and, much like industrialisation and increased urbanisation, was not a new development during the modernist period. However, the social effects of all three were increasingly felt during this period of social instability.

<sup>160</sup> Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism Volume I: The Women of 1928* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995), 80.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>162</sup> Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 445.

<sup>163</sup> Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 193.

Nicholls' study is concerned with introducing previously neglected, predominantly female, modernist authors such as H.D., Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore and Mina Loy who constitute "anti-modernists" who sought to dissolve "ideas of difference as opposition". (201) Nicholls' study is a useful one and his proposition allows us to distinguish between those modernists privileged by the Leavis-influenced canon and those excluded from it. However, Nicholls' positioning of modernists/anti-modernists only upholds the binary opposition of canonical/non-canonical, male/female, already firmly established. This is particularly problematic when one considers Nicholls' central tenet that the anti-modernists sought to disrupt the dominant suppression of all things *other* — Nicholls' maintains the binary and simply reinforces that which, he argues, the anti-modernists sought to disrupt. Further, Nicholls positions the anti-modernists as operating in response to the modernists, a move which fails to acknowledge how the anti-modernists were working concurrently and, like the "Men of 1914" and the New Critics, neglects to address the diverse socio-political concerns which emerged through the writings of the anti-modernists, focusing on form alone. Nicholls' introduction of gender politics marks a move away from form-centred engagements with modernism but it does not escape the reliance upon the binary of *masculine/other*.

<sup>164</sup> In his essay "F. R. Leavis" George Steiner reinforces the image of Leavis' strong influence over the construction of the modernist canon by commenting that Leavis' *The Great Tradition* is "one of those rare books of literary comment that have reshaped the inner landscape of taste. Anyone dealing seriously with the development of English fiction must start, even if in disagreement, from Leavis' proposals." (p. 628) See: George Steiner, "F. R. Leavis" (1962) in *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972).

<sup>165</sup> Michael Levenson, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Scott comments of *The Well of Loneliness*'s trial that: "This event opened to discussion aspects of sexuality of central importance to feminism, making its date a watershed in cultural history." (Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, 242)

<sup>168</sup> Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, 241.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, xxxvii.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, xxiv.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, xl.



<sup>174</sup> Woolf, *AROO*, 53.

The image of the web, therefore, creates attachments between my own work and that of both Scott and Woolf.

<sup>175</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: The Question of Things Happening, Vol. II 1912-1922*, eds. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1976), Letter 853 to David Garnett dated 26th July 1917, 167.

<sup>176</sup> Woolf, MF, 104.

The relationship between Woolf and Bennett, whilst they only met once, has itself been under continual scrutiny by academics.

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.*, 104-5.

<sup>178</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" in *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), 90.

<sup>179</sup> Woolf, MF, 104.

<sup>180</sup> Woolf, MBMB, 90.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, 93.

<sup>183</sup> Woolf, MF, 104.

<sup>184</sup> Woolf, MBMB, 101.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

Here Woolf is imitating Bennett's own comments that a character ought to be real, true, and convincing in order to form a good novel, as she quotes him: "Style counts; plot counts; originality of outlook counts. But none of these counts anything like as much as the convincingness of the characters. If the characters are real the novel will have a chance." (90)

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.*, 101-2.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>191</sup> Woolf, MF, 104.

<sup>192</sup> Woolf, MBMB, 104.

<sup>193</sup> Woolf, MF, 106 and 105 respectively.

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*, 106.

<sup>195</sup> Genette, *Palimpsests*, 85.

<sup>196</sup> Woolf, MBMB, 93.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*, 100.

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*



- <sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, 101.
- <sup>202</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>203</sup> *ibid.*, 103.
- <sup>204</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>205</sup> *ibid.*, 95-6.
- <sup>206</sup> *ibid.*, 93-4.
- <sup>207</sup> *ibid.*, 94.
- <sup>208</sup> *ibid.*, 96.
- <sup>209</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>210</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>211</sup> *ibid.*, 93.
- <sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, 96.
- <sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, 105.
- <sup>214</sup> *ibid.*, 106.
- <sup>215</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>216</sup> *ibid.*, 97.
- <sup>217</sup> *ibid.*, 100.
- <sup>218</sup> *ibid.*, 99.
- <sup>219</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, 106.
- <sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, 107.
- <sup>222</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>223</sup> *ibid.*, 108.
- <sup>224</sup> Woolf, MF, 107.
- <sup>225</sup> Woolf, MBMB, 109.
- <sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, 108.
- <sup>227</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>228</sup> *ibid.*, 109.
- <sup>229</sup> *ibid.*, 110.
- <sup>230</sup> *ibid.*, 109.
- <sup>231</sup> *ibid.*, 110.
- <sup>232</sup> *ibid.*, 111.
- <sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, 105.



<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, 93.

<sup>236</sup> Woolf, MF, 106.

<sup>237</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> *ibid.*, 107.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>240</sup> I am consciously not using female here because there are a number of male writers whose works were similarly excluded for their “feminine” tone. I am retaining the use of a *male* and not masculine modernism because I wish to foreground the problematic conflation of sex and gender when it is convenient, and also because it highlights the centrality of Lewis’ label the “Men of 1914”. One may consider how homosexual men were not (and still are not) considered man enough to be ‘called to arms’, and it is this problematic treatment of sex and gender that I wish to highlight here (note: highlight, but *not* remotely agree with or adhere to).

<sup>241</sup> Martin Stannard, “Preface to *The Good Soldier*” in *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford and ed. Martin Stannard (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995), ix.

<sup>242</sup> I am not sure what those living authors who Ford co-opted had to say on the matter as the debate tends to focus on the one person who could not confirm or deny Ford’s influence, Conrad — this may be because of all those listed (by Stannard, for he is as useful as any) Conrad is the one who is, arguably (perhaps Hemmingway may rival him) the most prestigious.

<sup>243</sup> One may consider Woolf’s much examined relationship with Katherine Mansfield — their friendship was, it emerges through Woolf’s writings on Mansfield (diaries, letters as well as published essays and reviews), a complex one of respect, admiration and fondness plagued by paranoia (Woolf often fretted over Mansfield’s lack of correspondence and contact) and rivalry: Lee summarises it as “intimate but guarded, mutually inspiring but competitive (‘If she’s good then I’m not’).” [Lee; p. 386]

<sup>244</sup> Ford Madox Ford, “On Impressionism: Second Article” in *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford and ed. Martin Stannard (London, W. W. Norton and Company, 1995 [1915]), 265.

<sup>245</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> Ford Madox Ford, “On Impressionism: First Article” in *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford and ed. Martin Stannard (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995 [1915]), 262-3.

<sup>247</sup> Woolf, MF, 106.

<sup>248</sup> Ford, IMP II, 265.

<sup>249</sup> *ibid.*, 274

<sup>250</sup> Ford, IMP I, 263.

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*, 264

<sup>252</sup> Herbert Read, (consulting editor), *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art and Artists: Revised, Expanded and Updated Edition* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1994), 183.

<sup>253</sup> Richard Kendall, ed., *Monet by Himself* (London: Time Warner Books UK, 2004), 118.

<sup>254</sup> A letter from Claude Monet to Alice Monet, Rouen, 29th March 1893, in Kendall, *Monet by Himself*, 126.

<sup>255</sup> Claude Monet to Alice Monet, London, 3rd February 1901, in Kendall, *Monet by Himself*, 137.



<sup>256</sup> Kendall, *Monet by Himself*, 118.

<sup>257</sup> Woolf, MF, 106.

<sup>258</sup> Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 3-4.

<sup>259</sup> Lee, VW, 375.

<sup>260</sup> David, Bradshaw, introduction to *The Mark on the Wall and Other Short Fiction* by Virginia Woolf (Oxford: OUP, 2001), xi.

<sup>261</sup> Woolf commenced writing *Jacob's Room* in the spring of 1920, only a few months after she had written "An Unwritten Novel". In her biography Hermione Lee cites a letter Woolf wrote to Ethel Smyth in 1930, recollecting her "excitement": "The Unwritten Novel was the great discovery ... [that] showed me how I could embody all my deposit of experience in a shape that fitted it", exclaiming that once she had "discovered that method of approach" she could envision *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs Dalloway* "branching out of the tunnel" she had made. See Lee, VW, 376.

<sup>262</sup> Bowlby, 175, n. 4.

<sup>263</sup> *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>264</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*, (London: Vintage, 2000 [1922]), 24.

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Woolf herself alludes to the Georgians' playful treatment of syntax and grammar in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" when she notes how they have been "led to destroy the very foundations and rules of literary society. Grammar is violated; syntax disintegrated." (Woolf, MBMB, 108)

<sup>267</sup> Woolf, JR, 25.

<sup>268</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> Bowlby, 4.

<sup>270</sup> Woolf, JR, 25.

<sup>271</sup> Christopher Reed, "Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics", in *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf* ed. Diane F. Gillespie (London: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 26. Reed positions the crisis as being Woolf's response to the formalism of the Bloomsbury painters, however, his comments regarding Woolf's discomfort with the formalist's "standards of reality and authorial control" readily align Woolf's relationship with the Formalist aesthetics of Bloomsbury with her relationship with the Edwardian Materialists. (25)

<sup>272</sup> The similarities between this story and the Mrs Brown scenario are unavoidable; Reed's own synopsis foregrounds this: "Its narrator creates a story out of an incident witnessed in the world (an incident remarkably like the one still bothering Woolf in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown"), only to find that the world undermines the 'truth' of her tale." [Reed; pp. 25-6] Interestingly, Reed's synopsis relies upon the reader having a knowledge of the Mrs. Brown scenario to elucidate the "incident" witnessed. Note, the narrator's gender is referenced within the story when her fellow passenger addresses her as "Ma'am" [UN, 28.]

<sup>273</sup> Virginia Woolf, "An Unwritten Novel" in *The Mark on the Wall and Other Short Fiction* (Oxford: OUP, 2001 [1921]), 28-9.

<sup>274</sup> *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>275</sup> *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>276</sup> *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>277</sup> *ibid.*



<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*, 21-2

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>281</sup> Freud himself has been questioned for imposing himself over his patient; the “Dora” case has come under intense scrutiny from feminist psychoanalysts.

<sup>282</sup> Woolf, *UN*, 22.

<sup>283</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 24.

<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>285</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>287</sup> *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>288</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> Elizabeth Foley O’Connor, “Solid Reverberations: an Analysis of Virginia Woolf’s Use of Objects”, *Clarion: A Women’s Critical Journal*, 2003-4. Accessed on July 8th, 2004, [www.mills.edu/clarion/issues/2003/OConnor](http://www.mills.edu/clarion/issues/2003/OConnor).

<sup>291</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 24-5.

<sup>292</sup> O’Connor, “Solid Reverberations”.

<sup>293</sup> Woolf, *MF*, 106.

<sup>294</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 94.

The name is frequently described as a thinly veiled reference to the poet and shell-shock sufferer, Siegfried Sassoon — not only do the pair share the same symptoms and initials but Siegfried was, like Septimus, an uncommon first name. Showalter notes that “Woolf also knew Siegfried Sassoon, and had reviewed his war poems” and suggests that Septimus “perhaps owes something of his name, his appearance, and his war experience to Sassoon”. (Showalter, *Female Malady*, 192).

<sup>295</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 95.

<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*, 94.

One may also argue that his delusions also hark back to the ancient past: he hears birds sing in Greek, a language which signifies ancient civilisations in the same manner as the archaic language of Latin.

<sup>297</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *ibid.*, 25.

<sup>300</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>301</sup> *ibid.*, 28-9.

<sup>302</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>303</sup> *ibid.*, 30.

<sup>304</sup> *ibid.*, 33.



<sup>305</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

Woolf leaves this connection for the reader to make, thus refusing to impose her own voice over both the intradiegetic impressions, and those formed by the reader themselves.

<sup>306</sup> *ibid.*, 78.

<sup>307</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" in *Collected Papers Volume IV*, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 169.

Freud posits three factors in all: "[the] loss of the object, ambivalence, and the regression of the libido into the ego". (169)

<sup>308</sup> *ibid.*, 153.

<sup>309</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 103.

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*, 75.

<sup>311</sup> *ibid.*, 96.

<sup>312</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>313</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>314</sup> Interestingly, Freud published this essay in 1917, at the peak of the First World War (the Battle of the Somme, 1st July to 18th November 1916, resulted in over a million casualties and was one of the longest battles of the war; the Battle of Verdun, whilst not as bloody as the Somme, lasted nearly the entirety of 1916, 21st February till 18th December).

<sup>315</sup> Elaine Showalter in *Hystories* comments: "What used to be called hysteria is now diagnosed as somatization disorder, conversion disorder, or dissociative identity disorder." The latter, also referred to as multiple personality disorder, involves a disintegration of identity and clearly reflects Freud's understanding of the condition as being concerned with issues of identification. The two former disorders both echo the hysteric's manifestation of somatic symptoms for which there is no identifiable physiological cause. (Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1997), 17).

<sup>316</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>317</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (London: MIT Press, 2003), 68.

He identifies Hippocrates as being the first to use the term hysteria (and, specifically in conjunction with the theory of the wandering womb) in his thirty-fifth aphorism, which dates from around 300 BC, citing the following quotation: "When a woman suffers from hysteria or difficult labor [sic.] an attack of sneezing is beneficial." (68)

Note, Didi-Huberman is citing Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 10. Interestingly, Veith charts writings on the disease back further, to a "document known as the *Kahun Papyrus*" which "dates from about 1900 BC". (Veith, *Hysteria*, 4.)

<sup>319</sup> The sexual aetiology has its roots in the writings of the 2nd century physician Galen and is, famously, the central tenet of Freud's theories. Galen, Veith informs us, observed a widow who suffered from "repeated hysterical paroxysms" which ceased upon her second marriage, only to return when the woman was widowed again. From his studies "Galen concluded that hysterical manifestations" were the result of "the suppression of the menses" or sexual abstinence and he proceeded to report his successful treatment of hysterical women "which involved the application of warm substances" and the stimulation of the genital organs (masturbation). (Veith, *Hysteria*, 37-8.)

See also Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). Maines discusses how, during Medieval times, hysterical women were prescribed more sex if married, if single the women were advised to wed or have a midwife induce sexual pleasure.



<sup>320</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 235.

<sup>321</sup> Notably, Charcot was not singularly interested in hysteria but, as Porter explains, he sought “to bring order to the chaos of neurological symptom clusters” through clinical observation. See: Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 137.

<sup>322</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 147.

<sup>323</sup> Roy Porter, ed., *The Faber Book of Madness* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993 [1991]), 385 and 93 respectively.

<sup>324</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 79.

<sup>325</sup> Porter, *The Faber Book of Madness*, 463.

Charcot is determining that the origin of hysteria is “always the genitals”. My translation.

<sup>326</sup> Freud attended some of Charcot’s lectures as a student.

<sup>327</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 80.

Charcot concluded that the sexuality of male hysterics, like that of their female counterparts, was affected by the disease, with symptoms including impotency and spermatorrhea (the involuntary discharge of semen).

<sup>328</sup> Ruth Harris, introduction to *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System* by J-M Charcot, ed. Ruth Harris and trans. Thomas Savill (London: Routledge, 1991), xxiii.

<sup>329</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 80.

<sup>330</sup> Harris, introduction, xxi.

<sup>331</sup> The *grande hystérie* comprised a four-phased seizure (although Showalter notes it as having three phases in *The Female Malady*, 150), as summarised by Didi-Huberman (and evident in the Richer table/tableaux he includes, see fig. 46, pp. 118-9): “This attack proceeds in four phases or periods: the *epileptoid* phase, mimicking or “reproducing” an epileptic fit; *clownism*, the phase of contortions or so-called illogical movements; “*plastic poses*” or “*attitudes passionnelles*”; finally *delirium*, so-called terminal delirium, the painful phase during which hysterics “start talking”, during which one tries to stop the attack, by every possible means.” (Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 115). Didi-Huberman describes Charcot’s desire “to forge a concept of a hysteria that could not lie, a major hysteria”, [p. 77] which led to Charcot’s discovery of *grande hystérie*, or “the great hysterical attack”. [p. 115]. These four phases were subsequently depicted in Paul Richer’s “classification table (a “synoptic table of the ‘complete and regular great hysterical attack’, with typical positions and their ‘variants’”) which was published in 1881. Richer’s illustrations are noted by Didi-Huberman as bearing a distinctive resemblance to the photographs taken of Augustine: “Notice also that it is Augustine’s face, above all, that illustrates and ‘synopsizes’ the hysterical type in Richer’s grand chart.” (117) See also Ruth Harris, introduction, xxii.

<sup>332</sup> Paul Régnard was the principal photographer who, working alongside Désiré Madloire Bournville, produced the tri-volume *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*. Paul Richer, a professor of anatomy, was the graphic artist employed to produce the hysterical tableaux based on Régnard’s photographs.

<sup>333</sup> The presentation of the hysteric experiencing the *grande hystérie* was the “grand finale” of Charcot’s lectures which were laced with demonstrations of the effects of hypnotism on the hysteric alongside hysterical somatic symptoms such as limb paralyses.

<sup>334</sup> Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, 187.

<sup>335</sup> Harris, introduction, xvi-xvii.



<sup>336</sup> *ibid.*

Didi-Huberman reinforces Harris' suggestion of the influence of the institution: "I would say that this institution was structured as a bribe: in fact, every hysteric had to make a regular show of her orthodox 'hysterical nature' ... to avoid being transferred to the severe 'division' of the quite simple and so-called incurable 'alienated women.'... The bribe went something like this: either you seduce me (showing yourself in this way to be hysterical), or else I will consider you to be an incurable, and then you will no longer be exhibited but hidden away, forever, in the dark." (Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 170)

<sup>337</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 33, 44 and xi respectively.

<sup>338</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984 [1974]), 59.

<sup>339</sup> *ibid.*, 125.

Irigaray is drawing upon Lacan who determined that woman cannot be signified, she has no thing and, therefore, is nothing. Unfortunately there is not the space to discuss Irigaray's deconstruction of the hysteric and phallocentrism, but it is sufficient to note Irigaray's foregrounding of the hysteric as a construction, or cultural icon.

<sup>340</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 117.

Didi-Huberman, under the title "Augustine as Masterpiece", cites Charcot's description of Augustine as a "very regular, very classical example", adding how the artist Paul Richer (who produced Charcot's hysterical tableaux — a pictorial table depicting the stages of *grande hystérie* and its variations) further described Augustine as "the patient of ours whose plastic poses and *attitudes passionnelles* have the most regularity". (117) Didi-Huberman is citing: J-M Charcot, *Oeuvres Complètes, Volume I*, (Paris: Lecrosnier and Babé/ Progrès Médical, 1886), 396; and Paul Richer, *Etudes Cliniques sur la Grande Hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie*. 2nd ed., (Paris: Delahaye and Lecrosnier, 1881-1885), 90. Elsewhere, Didi-Huberman describes Augustine as having become "an attested form, a classic or typical form of hysteria in her so-called attacks of ecstasy". (142) In *Hystories* Elaine Showalter, speaking of the famous case studies of hysteria involving the hysterics Augustine, Anna O. and Dora (examined by Charcot, Breuer and Freud respectively) who have been the favoured subjects of feminist criticism of patriarchal culture, comments that "the nineteenth-century hysterical supermodels [who] epitomize universal female oppression" for feminist writers and critics. (10)

<sup>341</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 87. Citing Charcot IPS 2; p. 127-8.

<sup>342</sup> *ibid.*, 85

<sup>343</sup> Augustine's position as a nurse's assistant would have afforded her greater exposure to a number of hysterical symptoms and, thus, increased her hysterical tableaux — she had the opportunity to witness many of the four thousand patients beyond those in neighbouring cells or on her own ward.

<sup>344</sup> *ibid.*, 256.

<sup>345</sup> *ibid.*, 276: "'1880. April 6. — X ... has relapsed; she has been returned to the service as a patient. The compressor, ether, and chloroform are used to suppress the attacks. On several occasions she is seen to have periods of agitation, during which she breaks and shatters windows, rips the straitjacket, etc. On June 11, as her agitation had become more violent X... was put into a cell.'" Citing: D-M Bourneville and P. Régner, *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*, volume III (Paris: Bureaux du Progrès médical/Delahaye and Lecrosnier, 1879-1880), 197.

<sup>346</sup> *ibid.*, xi.

<sup>347</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 148-9.

She notes how the lecture hall featured a lithograph of Charcot lecturing with a hysteric in a swoon, and, opposite, a painting by Robert-Fleury of Pinel freeing a madwoman. Freud also had a copy in his office.



<sup>348</sup> Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 116 and 44 respectively.

Didi-Huberman notes how Professor Rummo's *Iconografia fotografica del grande Isterismo* published in 1890 (which Didi-Huberman describes, imitating Rummo's native tongue, as an "*Omaggio al prof. J.-M. Charcot*") is "a catalog [sic] in which the real, photographically authenticated, itself presents homage to the rationality of the Salpêtrière nosological concepts and figurative types". (116) He also notes how "Tebaldi's work, for example, published in Verona in 1884, reproduced the exact typographical arrangement of the Salpêtrière's plates". (44) Rummo was based in Pisa.

<sup>349</sup> *ibid.*, 115.

Charcot refused to listen to Augustine's repeated periods of delirium involving scenes of rape (she was raped by her step-father at the age of 13) as Didi-Huberman notes: "Most often she had visions of rape, blood, ... fires, terrors, and hatred of men." (137) He later notes: "As for Augustine, she was prey to incessant deliria of rape ... and yet, it bears repeating, these moments were not once deemed worthy of being photographed, or at least not worthy of being printed." (160)

<sup>350</sup> Feminism has also taken issue with the predominance of biological determinism in Freudian psychoanalysis, which is the foundation from which Lacan developed his own theories.

<sup>351</sup> Jacqueline Rose, "Introduction — II" in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, by Jacques Lacan and eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 51.

<sup>352</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" [1905 (1901)] in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume VII: A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works* trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 41.

<sup>353</sup> *ibid.*, 7-8.

Elsewhere Freud explains that the hysterical symptoms are related to "suppressed thoughts which are struggling for expression", and that the symptoms may only ever be "cleared-up" "by looking for their psychical significance". (41) He also states "Any one who takes up psycho-analytic work will quickly discover that a symptom has more than one meaning and serves to represent several unconscious mental processes simultaneously" (47).

<sup>354</sup> Charles Bernheimer, "Introduction, Part One" in *In Dora's Case: Freud—Hysteria—Feminism, Second Edition* eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>355</sup> Steven Marcus, Steven, "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History" in *In Dora's Case: Freud—Hysteria—Feminism, Second Edition*. eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 85. Earlier in the essay Marcus referred to the case history as "a fictional construction that is at the same time satisfactory to us in the form of the truth, and as the form of the truth". ( 72)

<sup>356</sup> Jacqueline Rose, "Dora: Fragment of an Analysis" in *In Dora's Case: Freud—Hysteria—Feminism, Second Edition*. eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 133 and 132 respectively.

<sup>357</sup> Irigaray, *Speculum*, 133.

<sup>358</sup> Shoshana Felman, "Women and Madness: A Critical Phallacy", in *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), 153.

<sup>359</sup> Lisa L. Deidrich, "'Hysterical Men' Shell-shock and the Destabilisation of Masculinity" in *Visual Signs: Feminist Reconfigurations of the Bio/logical Body* eds. Magrit Shildrick and Janet Price (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 146.

<sup>360</sup> *ibid.*, 153.

<sup>361</sup> *ibid.*



<sup>362</sup> *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>363</sup> *ibid.*, 161.

<sup>364</sup> *ibid.*, 148-9. Charcot distinguished between epilepsy (as a neurological condition) and the epileptic seizures experienced by hysterics, the seizures experienced during the *grande hystérie* phase of an hysterical attack were alternatively known as hystero-epilepsy.

<sup>365</sup> Judith Butler discusses the performance of gender in *Gender Trouble*, drawing upon the performances of male drag artists Butler expounds her theory of performativity which, she argues, undermines phallocentric gender normatives by highlighting how gender is performed and, therefore, is little more than a social construction.

<sup>366</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 176.

<sup>367</sup> *ibid.*, 171.

<sup>368</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> *ibid.*, 190.

<sup>370</sup> *ibid.*, 172.

<sup>371</sup> *ibid.*, 190.

<sup>372</sup> *ibid.*, 192-3.

<sup>373</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Prime Minister" in *The Mrs Dalloway Reader* ed. Francine Prose (New York: Harcourt, 2004 [1922]), 74.

<sup>374</sup> *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>375</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 172.

<sup>376</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 100-101.

Bromide is a sedative that was prescribed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for, amongst other things, calming hysterics. Jimmy Laing, as cited in Roy Porter's *The Faber Book of Madness*, recalls: "And, of course, there was the old favourite, bromide. Bromide we used a lot at that time. ... It seems quite amazing looking back, that here we were in the late [nineteen-] Forties and early Fifties, and there was still no real progress in the way that mental patients were treated for their illness. It was still just a case of admitting a patient to an institution and as long as he or she was quite well behaved there would be no trouble. The authorities simply wanted to get through the day without any hassle." (223-4.) Sedation, drug addiction and silent acquiescence: this, it would seem, is what faced Septimus in Bradshaw's "rest home".

<sup>377</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>378</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>379</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> *ibid.*, 102-3.

<sup>382</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>383</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>384</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> *ibid.*, 105-6.

<sup>386</sup> *ibid.*, 106.



<sup>387</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> *ibid.*, 108.

<sup>389</sup> *ibid.*, 107.

<sup>390</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>392</sup> *ibid.*, 109-10.

<sup>393</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>394</sup> *ibid.*, 111.

<sup>395</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> *ibid.*, 113.

<sup>397</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>399</sup> *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>400</sup> *ibid.*, 157.

<sup>401</sup> *ibid.*, 159.

<sup>402</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>403</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>404</sup> *ibid.*, 162.

<sup>405</sup> *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>406</sup> *ibid.*, 163.

<sup>407</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>408</sup> *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>409</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> *ibid.*, 165.

<sup>411</sup> Jacques Lacan, "God and the Jouissance of The Woman" in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 145.

<sup>412</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 202.

<sup>413</sup> *ibid.*, 201.

<sup>414</sup> *ibid.*, 203.

<sup>415</sup> *ibid.*, 201.

<sup>416</sup> *ibid.*, 201, 200, 201, and 200 respectively.

<sup>417</sup> *ibid.*, 202.

<sup>418</sup> *ibid.*, 202.



<sup>419</sup> *ibid.*, 204 and 202 respectively.

<sup>420</sup> *ibid.*, 202.

<sup>421</sup> *ibid.*, 203.

<sup>422</sup> *ibid.*, 204.

<sup>423</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>424</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>425</sup> Virginia Woolf, letter to Gerald Duckworth, June 14th, 1925 in *The Mrs Dalloway Reader* ed. Francine Prose (New York: Harcourt, 2004), 100.

<sup>426</sup> Woolf, *Diary II*, 248. Extract from Woolf's entry on Tuesday 19th June 1923.

<sup>427</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 197.

<sup>428</sup> *ibid.*, 200 and 201 respectively.

<sup>429</sup> *ibid.*, 200.

<sup>430</sup> *ibid.*, 201.

<sup>431</sup> *ibid.*, 104.

<sup>432</sup> E. M. Forster, "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf" in *The Mrs Dalloway Reader* ed. Francine Prose (New York: Harcourt, 2004 [1925]), 143.

<sup>433</sup> *ibid.*, 143.

<sup>434</sup> *ibid.*, 145.

<sup>435</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 127.

<sup>436</sup> O'Connor, "Solid Reverberations".

<sup>437</sup> Donna K. Reed, "Merging Voices: *Mrs Dalloway* and *No Place*," *Comparative Literature*, 42:2 (1995): 118 and 135 respectively.

<sup>438</sup> O'Connor, "Solid Reverberations".

<sup>439</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>441</sup> Emily Jensen, "Clarissa Dalloway's Respectable Suicide" in *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant* ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 162.

<sup>442</sup> *ibid.*, 169.

<sup>443</sup> *ibid.*, 170 and 178 respectively.

<sup>444</sup> *ibid.*, 173.

<sup>445</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 200.

<sup>446</sup> Forster, "Early Novels", 143.

<sup>447</sup> Laura A. Smith, "Who Do We Think Clarissa Dalloway is Anyway? Re-Search Into Seventy Years Of Woolf Criticism" in *Re: Reading, Re: Writing, Re:Teaching Virginia Woolf: Selected Papers from the Fourth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf* eds. Eileen Barrett and Patricia Cramer (New York: Pace University Press, 1995), 215.



<sup>448</sup> *ibid.*, 219.

<sup>449</sup> *ibid.*, 215.

<sup>450</sup> *ibid.*, 216.

<sup>451</sup> *ibid.*, 219.

<sup>452</sup> *ibid.*, 218.

<sup>453</sup> *ibid.*

Smith is citing Mark Spilka, "On Mrs. Dalloway's Absent Grief: A Psycholiterary Speculation", *Contemporary Literature* 20.3 (1979): 336.

<sup>454</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 40.

<sup>455</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>456</sup> *ibid.*, 38.

<sup>457</sup> *ibid.*, 37.

<sup>458</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>459</sup> *ibid.*, 37-8.

<sup>460</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>461</sup> *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>462</sup> *ibid.*, 47.

<sup>463</sup> *ibid.*, 52.

<sup>464</sup> Later in the novel Clarissa recalls a "hot June day" at Bourton where Clarissa saw "her father and mother on the lawn under the trees, with the tea-things out, and the beds of dahlias, the hollyhocks, the pampas grass". (123)

<sup>465</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>466</sup> *ibid.*, 195.

<sup>467</sup> *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>468</sup> Jesse Wolfe, "The Sane Woman in the Attic: Sexuality and Self-Authorship in *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 51: 1 (2005): 35.

<sup>469</sup> *ibid.*, 44.

<sup>470</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>471</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> *ibid.*, 35.

<sup>473</sup> *ibid.*, 43.

<sup>474</sup> *ibid.*, 42.

<sup>475</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 39.

<sup>476</sup> Wolfe, "The Sane Woman," 41.

<sup>477</sup> *ibid.*, 43.



<sup>478</sup> Christopher Herbert similarly explores the novel's rejection of a single truth using relativity theory's refutation "of categorical or 'absolute' knowledge". Christopher Herbert, "Mrs. Dalloway, the Dictator, and the Relativity Paradox", *Novel* 35:1 (2001): 119.

<sup>479</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 182.

<sup>480</sup> *ibid.*, 183.

<sup>481</sup> *ibid.*, 184.

<sup>482</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>483</sup> *ibid.*, 189

<sup>484</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> *ibid.*, 191.

<sup>486</sup> *ibid.*, 192.

<sup>487</sup> *ibid.*, 193.

<sup>488</sup> *ibid.*, 194.

<sup>489</sup> *ibid.*; p. 200.

<sup>490</sup> *ibid.*; p. 205.

<sup>491</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>493</sup> *ibid.*; p. 206.

<sup>494</sup> *ibid.*; p. 207.

<sup>495</sup> *ibid.*; p. 208.

<sup>496</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> *ibid.*, 212.

<sup>498</sup> *ibid.*, 209.

<sup>499</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> *ibid.*, 213.

<sup>501</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>503</sup> Sally, in so much as her much briefer presence in the novel's present suggests, has not lingered quite so much on what occurred (or what did not) at Bourton, for she is quick to inform Clarissa and Peter of her life as a mother to five boys in the North of England. However, she too mourns the absence, or loss, of Clarissa from her life, as suggested by her continual invitations for Clarissa to visit her.

<sup>504</sup> Smith, "Who Do We Think Clarissa Dalloway is Anyway?" 219.

<sup>505</sup> Walter Kendrick, "On Film: The Unfilmable," *Salmagundi*, Winter 1999: 51. Kendrick is citing Eileen Atkins in an interview with Jean Nathan of *The New York Times* (no further bibliographic reference provided).

<sup>506</sup> *ibid.*, 50.



<sup>507</sup> Roger Ebert, "Mrs Dalloway," March 6th, 1998, [rogerebert.suntimes.com/](http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/) cited by Geraghty, *Major Motion Picture*, 58.  
Atkins, cited by Kendrick, paragraph 4, full quote in subtitle.

<sup>508</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>509</sup> Kendrick, "On Film," 50.

<sup>510</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>511</sup> *ibid.*, 60 and 59 respectively.

<sup>512</sup> *ibid.*, 60.

<sup>513</sup> *ibid.*, 59.

<sup>514</sup> Melissa Anderson, "In Search of Adaptation: Proust and Film," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 100.

<sup>515</sup> Martin Halliwell, "Modernism and Adaptation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen* eds. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 90-1.

<sup>516</sup> *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>517</sup> *ibid.*, 92.

<sup>518</sup> Halliwell goes on to examine *The Hours*, acknowledging amongst other things its retention of "alternating perspectives" (102).

<sup>519</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

Halliwell goes on to suggest *The Hours* succeeded where Gorris's film failed, arguing that "*The Hours* works through this by projecting the interior world onto two different characters separated by time and space"(103). I shall demonstrate how Gorris's film does achieve this and in a manner which develops a stylistic relationship with the novel's literary impressionism.

<sup>520</sup> Hutcheon, *Adaptation*, 52.

<sup>521</sup> *ibid.*, 56, 63, and 68.

<sup>522</sup> Geraghty, *Major Motion Picture*, 47-8.

<sup>523</sup> *ibid.*, 47.

<sup>524</sup> *ibid.*, 48.

<sup>525</sup> *ibid.* My italics.

<sup>526</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>527</sup> *ibid.*, 48-9.

<sup>528</sup> *ibid.*, 50.

<sup>529</sup> *ibid.*, 51.

<sup>530</sup> *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>531</sup> *ibid.*, 58.



<sup>532</sup> See: Neil Sinyard, "'Even the Nice Ones Aren't Nice': Sisterhood and Feminist Theory in the Early Films of Marlene Gorris," in *Sisterhoods: Across the Literature/Media Divide* eds. Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter and Imelda Whelehan (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 101-117. Interestingly, Sinyard concludes his essay with the following: "Marleen Gorris' forthcoming film is an adaptation of one of the founding documents of feminist literature, Virginia Woolf's great modernist novel, *Mrs Dalloway*. It is a project that could not be more appropriate for someone of her singular gifts." (117)

<sup>533</sup> Geraghty, *Major Motion Picture*, 59.

<sup>534</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>535</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>536</sup> Claire Monk, "Reviews: *Mrs Dalloway*," *Sight and Sound*, 8:3(1998): 54.

<sup>537</sup> Geraghty quotes one critic who "despaired at 'the parade of dresses and vintage cars, the museum cabinet of social attitudes. This is not a Merchant-Ivory film . . . But it often behaves like one.'" (p. 62). Citing: Geoff Brown, review of *Mrs Dalloway*, *Times* (London), March 5th, 1998.

<sup>538</sup> Leslie Hankins, "'Colour Burning on a Framework of Steel': Virginia Woolf, Marleen Gorris, Eileen Atkins, and *Mrs Dalloway(s)*," *Women's Studies*, 28. 4 (1999): 370.

<sup>539</sup> Geraghty, 62.

<sup>540</sup> *ibid.*, 62 and 63.

<sup>541</sup> *ibid.*, 63.

In "Vanessa Redgrave's *Mrs Dalloway*: Revolutionary or Recluse?" Susan Frome questions Redgrave's choice of role considering her personal politics and previous performances, asking: "Is it possible that she has been somehow reduced to portraying a pale, fragile figure barely able to get out of bed in order to waft diaphanously across the park to the nearby florist?" (227) Upon "deeper reflection" Frome concludes *Mrs Dalloway* to be a "worthy work", allowing Redgrave to "explore and reveal endless facets of feminine heroism" through her noble depiction of one of those "forgotten women of society" (229). Susan Frome, "Vanessa Redgrave's *Mrs Dalloway*: Revolutionary or Recluse?", *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 28:3 (2000): 227-9.

<sup>542</sup> *ibid.*

Interestingly, Eileen Atkins, as scriptwriter, would be a fourth female figure contributing to the reception of the film, but Geraghty does not discuss her. Atkins's presence in the film's critical reception was limited to snide comments of idolotry, such as Kendrick mentioned above, however, her acting credentials are as worthy as those of Redgrave and it is unfortunate that she, like Gorris, seems to be negated or treated with disdain.

<sup>543</sup> Halliwell, "Modernism and Adaptation," 103.

<sup>544</sup> O'Connor, "Solid Reverberations."

<sup>545</sup> Monk, "Reviews: *Mrs Dalloway*," 54.

<sup>546</sup> Eileen Atkins, "*Mrs. Dalloway*: the script", *Scenario*, 5.1 (1999): 155.

<sup>547</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 107.

<sup>548</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>549</sup> *ibid.*, 109.

<sup>550</sup> *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>551</sup> *ibid.*, 164.



<sup>552</sup> To highlight Holmes' impotency it absents his role as carer for the recently widowed Rezia to whom he prescribes a sedative in the novel to calm her. Rather, the film has him exclaim "The coward! ... Why the devil did he do it?", a question which Holmes' will never be able to answer — the answer dies with Septimus and his ultimate act of defiance is refusing them the answers, refusing them his final moments in which he finds his own answers, his own liberation.

<sup>553</sup> *ibid.*, 200.

<sup>554</sup> *ibid.*, 104.

<sup>555</sup> This positive, complementary element of the Dalloway marriage is noted by Wolfe, whose article I examined in the previous chapter.

<sup>556</sup> Hankins, "'Colour Burning on a Framework of Steel'," 371-2.

<sup>557</sup> *ibid.*, 372.

<sup>558</sup> Geoffrey Macnab, "Video Choice", *Sight and Sound*, 8.10 (1998): 63.

<sup>559</sup> Hankins, "'Colour Burning on a Framework of Steel'," 371-2.

<sup>560</sup> *ibid.*, 372.

I actually find the aural cacophony acutely effective in representing Septimus's hysteria, distress and isolation.

<sup>561</sup> *ibid.*, 369.

<sup>562</sup> *ibid.*, 369.

<sup>563</sup> Macnab, "Video Choice", 63.

<sup>564</sup> Catherine R. Stimpson, foreword to *Virginia Woolf Icon* by Brenda R. Silver (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), xi.

<sup>565</sup> Quoted from the back cover blurb of Anna Snaith, ed., *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 2007.

<sup>566</sup> Anna Snaith, introduction to *Palgrave Advances Virginia Woolf Studies* ed. Anna Snaith, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

<sup>567</sup> Silver, Brenda R. *Virginia Woolf Icon* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>568</sup> *ibid.*, 36.

See chapter 2 for my overview of feminism's engagement with Woolf and the canon.

<sup>569</sup> *ibid.*, 30.

<sup>570</sup> *ibid.*, 90.

Of Woolf's being featured on the cover of *Time* magazine Silver notes: "such an appearance carried with it the connotations of celebrity, of stardom, bestowed as much as earned; the figure was assured his or her fifteen minutes of fame." (79)

<sup>571</sup> *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>572</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>573</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>574</sup> *ibid.*, 116.

<sup>575</sup> *ibid.*, 272.

<sup>576</sup> *ibid.*, 244.



<sup>577</sup> *ibid.*, 243.

<sup>578</sup> *ibid.*, 4

<sup>579</sup> *ibid.*, 31.

<sup>580</sup> *ibid. my italics*

<sup>581</sup> Hermione Lee, "Ways of Dying: Is moody, suicidal Virginia Woolf too complicated for cinema?" *The Guardian: Saturday Review*, February 8th, 2003, 18. Accessed on July 9th, 2003, <http://proquest.umi.com>.

<sup>582</sup> Silver, *Icon*, 213.

Silver concludes the sentence by explaining how such action "undoes the binary, transforming the adaptation into the original against which other versions are then read and measured." (213).

<sup>583</sup> *ibid.*, 169.

Silvers is citing Stephen Frears from a letter to Silvers in July 1997. Frears is referencing his film *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* which heavily features a poster of Woolf.

<sup>584</sup> Michael Cunningham, "First Love," *PEN American Center Website*. Accessed on November 8th, 2007, [www.pen.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/1114](http://www.pen.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/1114). Taken from a talk Cunningham delivered in 2000.

<sup>585</sup> Silver, *Icon*, 123.

<sup>586</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>587</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 769.

<sup>588</sup> Silver, *Icon*, 123.

<sup>589</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>590</sup> *ibid.*, 243.

Silver also notes how, despite the 'conspiracy theories' surrounding Monroe's mysterious death it is generally understood to have been 'self-destructive', whether suicide or accidental death.

<sup>591</sup> Cunningham, "First Love".

Cunningham's encounter was with a girl whom he describes as "the pirate queen of school" who was "beautiful and mean and smart" and whom he sought to impress with a suave comment on the "poetry of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen", in response to which she asked how he felt of Virginia Woolf and T.S.Eliot. The encounter prompted him to go to the library and take out the only copy of either a Woolf or Eliot text, *Mrs Dalloway*.

<sup>592</sup> The chapter is only one of two whose title is in quotation marks, the other being "Bloomsbury", reflecting the uncertainty of these labels.

<sup>593</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 175.

<sup>594</sup> *ibid.*, 199.

<sup>595</sup> *ibid.*, 194.

de Salvo's work is highly problematic in that it turns psychoanalytic readings of Woolf's writing into biographical writing which transforms scenes in Woolf's fiction into 'real-life' events. It is important, I feel, to follow Lee's own stance, she identifies the passages in Woolf's diaries, correspondence, and auto-biographical writings which address her memories of childhood abuse whilst maintaining their evasive and ambiguous tone. In contrast to de Salvo, Lee does not attempt to interpret Woolf's writings but rather provides a commentary and highlights the ambiguity of such writings – for instance, Lee demonstrates Woolf's mournful response to Gerald's death which would seem to be at odds with the revelation that he may have abused her.

<sup>596</sup> *ibid.*, 199.



<sup>597</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1972 [1953]), 23. Diary entry January 26th, 1920.

Elsewhere, during the period she was writing *Mrs. Dalloway* she again expresses concern, and dislike, for the autobiographical entering her fiction: "for if one lets the mind run loose it becomes egotistic; personal, which I detest." (69, diary entry November 18th, 1924, written whilst revising "the mad chapters").

<sup>598</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 192. Also see n. 79, p. 791-2.

<sup>599</sup> Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: Volume II, 1912 – 1941* (London: Triad/Granada, 1982 [1972]), 226.

<sup>600</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 760.

<sup>601</sup> *ibid.*, 157.

<sup>602</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>603</sup> *ibid.*, 756. I have reproduced the note, and the second note, in Appendix A and B respectively.

<sup>604</sup> *ibid.*, 757.

<sup>605</sup> *ibid.*, 759-60.

<sup>606</sup> *ibid.*, 760.

<sup>607</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>608</sup> Bell, *Woolf II*, 226.

<sup>609</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>610</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>611</sup> *ibid.*, 225.

<sup>612</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>613</sup> This representation of Woolf as a petulant child emerges earlier in the text when Bell describes her letters home to Leonard from the nursing home she had been sent to as: "A few miserable shaky pencil-written notes to Leonard survive from that time. They make one think of a child sent away by its parents to some cruel school. ... Childlike, she burst out against the husband who had put her away in this awful place." (13)

<sup>614</sup> I performed a brief search on the internet using Google for "Virginia Woolf suicide note" which produced the following statistics. Of the first thirty links I examined (links leading to the same websites were ignored) twenty-one referred exclusively to the earlier note, only one referred exclusively to the second and two cited both. The other six were not specific in which note they referred to, they lacked direct quotation and their summation of the sentiments could be applied to either version. I performed an identical search using Yahoo which produced similar results, there being only two links in the first ten results produced by Yahoo which had not appeared in the thirty produced by Google. One quoted (exclusively) the earlier note, whilst the other was a biography of Leonard Woolf and did not specify either version of the note Woolf left. [Search performed 15/8/2006] In addition a link from the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain's website lead me to a copy of the earlier, more-famous, note – the page failing to note the second one altogether.

<sup>615</sup> Michael Cunningham, *The Hours* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003 [1999]), 229.

<sup>616</sup> Silver, *Icon*, 276.

<sup>617</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 760.



<sup>618</sup> *ibid.*, 765.

Lee is quoting the Coroner's report from the University of Sussex's collection of Leonard Woolf's papers, see n 100, p. 867.

<sup>619</sup> The original line being: "I begin to hear voices, and cant concentrate." The second mis-quote reads as follows in the original: "I cant fight it any longer, I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work", and later in the note "You have been entirely patient with me & incredibly good."

<sup>620</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 765.

<sup>621</sup> *ibid.*, 766.

Lee quoting Malcolm Cowley's review from *New Republic*, 6 October 1941, see n 108, p. 868.

<sup>622</sup> Virginia Woolf committed suicide on Friday 28th March 1941, she was last seen alive by the side of the River Ouse around twenty to twelve. See: Lee, *Woolf*, 761.

<sup>623</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (an extract taken from *Image-Music-Text* 1972) in *Reading Popular Narrative: A Source Book* ed. Bob Ashley (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 134.

<sup>624</sup> *ibid.*, 133.

<sup>625</sup> Many scholars have returned to the manuscripts of Woolf's novel to trace this autobiographical censorship. See: Helen Wussow, *Virginia Woolf: "The Hours"* (New York: Pace University Press, 1996) which examines an early manuscript of *Mrs Dalloway* held by the British Museum.

<sup>626</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 229.

<sup>627</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>628</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>629</sup> Woolf, *DVII*, 125. Diary entry for August 8th, 1921 after a 2 month period of illness during which she did not write in her diary.

<sup>630</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 4-5.

<sup>631</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>632</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>633</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 760.

Bell's biography is much less detailed and simply notes how Woolf left her note to Leonard "on the sitting-room mantel-piece", making no reference to the note Woolf left Vanessa. Bell, *Woolf II*, 226.

<sup>634</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 7.

This quote, it should be noted, occupies three of eight lines dedicated to representing Leonard's response to the suicide note.

<sup>635</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>636</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>637</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>638</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>639</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>640</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 23.



- <sup>641</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, ed. Lorna Sage (Oxford: OUP, 2001 [1915]), 397.
- <sup>642</sup> *ibid.*, 404.
- <sup>643</sup> *ibid.*, 404.
- <sup>644</sup> *ibid.*, 404.
- <sup>645</sup> For a complete copy of her letter see Appendix A which is a reproduction of the letter as reproduced in Lee, *Woolf*, 757.
- <sup>646</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Vintage Classics, 2000 [1931]), 25.
- <sup>647</sup> *ibid.*, 34.  
Early on in the novel Rhoda describes how "Now I spread my body on the frail mattress and hang suspended." (15)
- <sup>648</sup> *ibid.*, 188.
- <sup>649</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 763.  
Lee quotes the following from the letter: "[s]omeone wrote from a lunatic asylum saying that 'its not madness to take ones life. Its ones right if one cares to use it and that it the sole judgement of the person concerned. the only right we have left.'" This echoes the sentiment expressed by Septimus to Dr. Holmes as he flung himself from the window sill: "'I'll give it to you!' he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's railings." Woolf, *MD*, 164.
- <sup>650</sup> Woolf, *The Waves*, 47-8.
- <sup>651</sup> *ibid.*, 70.
- <sup>652</sup> *ibid.*, 109.
- <sup>653</sup> *ibid.*, 120.
- <sup>654</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 5.
- <sup>655</sup> *ibid.*, 7.
- <sup>656</sup> Stella Papamichael, "Film Review: The Hours," *BBCi Movies: Film Reviews*, February 10th, 2003. Accessed on August 16th, 2006, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2003/01/23/the\\_hours\\_2002\\_reviews.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2003/01/23/the_hours_2002_reviews.shtml).
- <sup>657</sup> Philip Hensher, "Few Authors make one want to vomit: Virginia Woolf does." *The Daily Telegraph*, January 24th, 2003. Accessed on July 9th, 2003, <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- <sup>658</sup> Peter Bradshaw, "Friday Review: Film of the Week: The nose has it," *The Guardian*, February 14th, 2003. [downloaded from proquest.umi.com on 9/7/2003].
- <sup>659</sup> Tyler, Nicola "Why Hollywood and its Moguls are so Afraid of Virginia Woolf," *Mail on Sunday*, January 5th, 2003. Accessed on July 9th, 2003, <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- <sup>660</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>661</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>662</sup> Desson Howe, "Kidman, Moore and Streep in their finest 'Hours' ," *Washington Post*, January 10th, 2003. Accessed on August 16th, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A33115-2003Jan9>.
- <sup>663</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>664</sup> *ibid.*



<sup>665</sup> Silver, *Icon*, 10.

Silver notes how, in Britain, Woolf's "centenary ... passed almost unnoticed." (10)

<sup>666</sup> As his article illustrates, Nicolson's experience of Woolf, comes down to the summers in the 1970s his father edited Woolf's letters and the numerous visiting academics who came to envisage Woolf's and Vita's affair. In addition, Nicolson was not born until after Woolf's death.

<sup>667</sup> Elliott, *Rethinking*, 136.

<sup>668</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>669</sup> *ibid.*, 140.

<sup>670</sup> Adam Nicholson, "Tales of Virginia Woolf, my grandmother's lover", *The Age*, February 23rd, 2003. Accessed on September 29th, 2004, <http://www.theage.com.au>.

<sup>671</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>672</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>673</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>674</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>675</sup> The screenplay direction for this moment: "Again, VIRGINIA looks at LEONARD, disobediently." David Hare, *The Hours: A Screenplay* (New York: Miramax Books, 2002), 8.

<sup>676</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>677</sup> Lee, "Moody."

<sup>678</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>679</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>680</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>681</sup> Hermione Lee, "Virginia Woolf's Nose" in *Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007 [2005]), 55.

<sup>682</sup> Lee, "Moody."

<sup>683</sup> Lee, "Nose," p. 58.

<sup>684</sup> Nicholson.

<sup>685</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>686</sup> Bell, *Woolf II*, 226; and Tyler respectively.

<sup>687</sup> Lee, "Nose", 55.

In her article "Ways of Dying: Is moody, suicidal Virginia Woolf too complicated for cinema?" the sentiment is reiterated almost verbatim: "The death scene is grotesquely prettified. Woolf drowned herself on a cold day in March in a dangerous ugly river that runs so fast, nothing grows on the bare banks. She was wearing an old fur coat, wellington boots and a hat. ... Kidman, bare-headed and dressed in a fetching tweed coat, walks gently into a beautiful, still, dappled stream, sun pouring through the trees in high summer". (Lee, "Moody.")

<sup>688</sup> author unknown. "An Artist Vanishes" in *Time*, April 14th, 1941. Accessed on August 15th, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,932221,00.html>.

<sup>689</sup> Nicolson

<sup>690</sup> Lee, "Nose," 60.



<sup>691</sup> Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 36.

<sup>692</sup> Lee, "Nose," 50.

In "Ways of Dying: Is moody, suicidal Virginia Woolf too complicated for cinema?" Lee, again, expresses the sentiments almost verbatim: "My reservations about the novel came from a biographer's reluctance to pursue a real person into fiction's territory of made-up thoughts and speeches. I found it hard to accept [the fictionalised] Virginia Woolf." (Lee, "Moody.") It is only the newspaper review that Lee follows this anxious statement with the exclamation that such fictionalisations proved "more of irritant" on screen.

<sup>693</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 42.

<sup>694</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>695</sup> *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>696</sup> *ibid.*, 42.

<sup>697</sup> *ibid.*, 148-9.

<sup>698</sup> *ibid.*, 150.

<sup>699</sup> *ibid.*, 150. Cunningham is quoting Woolf, *MD*, 11.

<sup>700</sup> *ibid.*, 151.

<sup>701</sup> *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>702</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 164.

<sup>703</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 152.

<sup>704</sup> *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>705</sup> *ibid.*, 187-8.

<sup>706</sup> Michael Cunningham and Elizabeth Farnsworth, "A conversation with Michael Cunningham," *Online News Hour*, April 20th, 1999. Accessed on July 24th, 2006, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june99/pulitzer\\_4-13.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june99/pulitzer_4-13.html).

<sup>707</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 407.

<sup>708</sup> *ibid.*, 408.

<sup>709</sup> *ibid.*, 409. Lee is quoting from Woolf's diaries, the former is taken from an entry on 10th September 1918 (*Diary, Volume I*; p. 192) and the latter from an entry on 24th August 1933 (*Diary, Vol IV*; p. 173.).

<sup>710</sup> *ibid.*, 405.

<sup>711</sup> Woolf, *MF*, 106.

<sup>712</sup> Virginia Woolf, "How One Should Read A Book?", *The Second Common Reader* (London: Harcourt, 1986 [1932]), 258.

<sup>713</sup> Woolf, *Diary II*, Entry dated 23rd May 1921.

<sup>714</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 414.

<sup>715</sup> Birgit Spengler, "Michael Cunningham Rewriting Virginia Woolf: Pragmatist vs. Modernist Aesthetics," *Woolf Studies Annual*, 10 (2004): 65.

<sup>716</sup> *ibid.*, 54.



<sup>717</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 414.

<sup>718</sup> *ibid.*, 414.

<sup>719</sup> Woolf, "How," 258.

<sup>720</sup> *ibid.*, 269.

<sup>721</sup> *ibid.*, 269-270.

<sup>722</sup> Lee, *Woolf*, 416.

<sup>723</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 40.

It is worth noting how the school-girl bookworm occupies the place of Other within the school community, her behaviour, her looks and her name all position her as outsider. In spite of her marriage to Dan, a war hero, she remains an outsider: she does not feel at home as housewife and mother it is as alien to her as her behaviour is to her community. Her only friend, Kitty, is barren and it is her inability to become a mother which has resulted in her shift to the periphery of the community.

<sup>724</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>725</sup> Spengler, "Michael Cunningham Rewriting Virginia Woolf," 67.

<sup>726</sup> *ibid.*

Spengler reinforces the relationship, again quoting Lee's biography, explaining how Woolf "thought of herself as a reader" (Lee, *Woolf*, 14).

<sup>727</sup> *ibid.*, 66. Citing Cunningham, *TH*, 150.

<sup>728</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women", *Women and Writing* (London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1979), 58-9.

<sup>729</sup> Spengler, "Michael Cunningham Rewriting Virginia Woolf," 67.

<sup>730</sup> *ibid.*, Citing Lee, *Woolf*, 404.

<sup>731</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 10-11.

<sup>732</sup> Smith, "Who Do We Think Clarissa Dalloway is Anyway?", 215.

<sup>733</sup> *ibid.*, 216.

<sup>734</sup> A more detailed biography for Michael Cunningham can be found here: <http://cityfile.com/profiles/michael-cunningham> [15/10/2010]

<sup>735</sup> Elliott, *Rethinking*, 174.

<sup>736</sup> Jensen, "Clarissa Dalloway's Respectable Suicide", 173.

<sup>737</sup> Elliott, *Rethinking*, 177.

<sup>738</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 40.

<sup>739</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 11.

<sup>740</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

<sup>741</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 47.

<sup>742</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 97-98.

<sup>743</sup> Woolf, *MD*, 203.



- <sup>744</sup> Wolfe, "The Sane Woman in the Attic: Sexuality and Self-Authorship in *Mrs. Dalloway*," 35.
- <sup>745</sup> Woolf, MF, 106.
- <sup>746</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 158.
- <sup>747</sup> *ibid.*, 157.
- <sup>748</sup> *ibid.*, 160.
- <sup>749</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>750</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>751</sup> *ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>752</sup> *ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>753</sup> *ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>754</sup> *ibid.*, 127.
- <sup>755</sup> *ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>756</sup> *ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>757</sup> *ibid.*, 158.
- <sup>758</sup> Tory Young, *The Hours: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2003), 69.
- <sup>759</sup> Cunningham, *TH*, 161.
- <sup>760</sup> *ibid.*, 162.



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