

**“The Women of Your Generation”:**

**Exploring the Changes of Literature and Society in Virginia Woolf’s**  
*Mrs. Dalloway*

by

Elizabeth Jane Hartig

“The Women of Your Generation”:

Exploring the Changes of Literature and Society in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*

by

Elizabeth Jane Hartig

A thesis presented for the B.A. degree

with Honors in

The Department of English

University of Michigan

Spring 2004



For my parents,

my brothers,

and

for Trevor

## Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis is a long, difficult process and one that is certainly not done alone. I would like to thank my academic advisor Professor Andrea Zemgulys. She always seemed to trust that I would work my ideas through (even when I had my doubts); she never added to the stress and pressure of the project, but only revived my faith and offered insightful comments. The cohort leader and program director Professor Sarah Blair also provided wise and abundant feedback. Throughout workshops and on muddled drafts, she patiently read and re-read my often incoherent sentences. Although I know her time must have been limited, she never indicated as much—remembering my particular project with amazing clarity. I am also indebted to my thesis cohort who not only gave helpful comments throughout the two semesters, but who also impressed me with their writing style and ability. I would also like to thank Dominic Oliver. It was in his tutorial, last year, that I first read Virginia Woolf and started thinking about her work as a possible thesis topic.

Most of the thesis work took place outside of the university walls and I would like to thank my friends and family for providing support and assistance throughout the year. My mother Lynea Hartig read the first parts of the first drafts and even offered to read *Mrs. Dalloway* to provide more feedback. I am also grateful to C. Jane Haslett who pored over the early draft, giving gentle criticism, but nevertheless opening my eyes to syntactical and conceptual possibilities.

In the last weeks of the writing process, Charles Srock and Kavita Payidar selflessly plowed through the final draft. Doing more than merely proofread, Chuck allayed my fears and searched for argumentative flaws. Similarly, Kavita applied her

own writing talents as she hunted for awkward phrases and rhetorical glitches. Even in the last minutes of frantic thesis writing, Trevor Clarke continued to offer helpful suggestions and keep me focused.

And, of course, thank you to the Joint House co-op. All of my housemates kept me grounded in the world outside of thesis mania, reminding me that a single paper could not determine my self-worth and that Friday nights weren't meant for studying anyway.

## Abstract

Exploring *Mrs. Dalloway*'s marginalized character Miss Kilman, I propose an alternative reading of Virginia Woolf as well as an explanation for her somewhat derogatory depictions of working women. Comparing the literary reforms of modernism to the social changes of the period, Woolf and her fictional persona Miss Kilman provide complimentary representations of generational shifts. Trapped in an intermediary state, Woolf works to define her vision of modernism while carrying the weight of literary tradition. Miss Kilman—an equally complex mixture of the past, present, and future—is in a similar position. Though presented as an awkward outsider, she attempts to bridge gaps of class and culture.

Chapter One presents the duality of Woolf's approach to writing through her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." Framed by the Arnold Bennett-Virginia Woolf debate regarding character development, I explore Woolf's ability to balance the seemingly dichotic approaches to realistic fiction. By demanding individual voices for her characters, Woolf also attempts to give space to figures previously unheard or overlooked.

The following chapter is a close reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*'s Miss Kilman. Woolf achieves the standard put forth in her essays and effectively creates the idiosyncratic identity of the character. Struggling to survive in contemporary London, Miss Kilman carries the weight of social tradition while striving for personal fulfillment; she furthers the notion of intergenerationality introduced in chapter one, providing a compliment to Woolf's struggles in the literary world.

The final chapter continues to depict the intermediary position of Miss Kilman in the social hierarchy of the period. Woolf's literary style is also explored, as her representations of working women differ dramatically from the psychological complexity of Miss Kilman's portrait. Refocusing on the life and experiences of Woolf, I emphasize the boundaries and norms of the social period as a probable explanation for Woolf's unsuccessful portrayals.

The concluding section highlights the importance of both Woolf's successful characterizations and her inability to apply her modernist ideal to all fictional creations. Attempting to link fiction and contemporary struggles, I call attention to the possibility of social change that often begins in the less restrictive, cultural sphere.

## CONTENTS

Preface	1
Introduction	4
Contemporary Changes: Turning to Face the Strange	
Chapter One	8
Miss Kilman, Mrs. Brown, and Arnold Bennett: Character Development	
Chapter Two	19
The Neglected Miss Kilman	
Chapter Three	31
Mrs. Woolf, Miss Kilman, and Working Women: Understanding the Unknown	
Conclusion	43
Social Revolutions: We All Want to Change the World	
Appendix A	45
Works Cited	47



## *Preface*

Here was what Kilgore Trout cried out to me in my father's voice:  
"Make me young, make me young, make me young!"

—Kurt Vonnegut Jr., *Breakfast of Champions* (295)

I almost cry every time I read that sentence. It's the last paragraph in the book and is followed only by Vonnegut's drawing of "ETC." in big block letters. One of my friends has a tattered copy on his bookshelf and I occasionally pull it out just to read that bit. To be honest, I don't really remember much of the convoluted plot that leads to this gut-retching cry. I don't think that makes any difference. The image of desperate, lonely Trout running after his creator, just as the narrator's memories blend into the fiction he's writing, is so painfully moving it can stand alone. As I began to study Virginia Woolf, I recognized shades of Kilgore Trout in Doris Kilman and found her equally painful and equally compelling.

When I read *Mrs. Dalloway*, it is Miss Kilman I remember. Her lust for Elizabeth Dalloway is closer to Trout's misery—Trout's running toward a second chance—than any type of romance. Miss Kilman's sad resignation that Elizabeth's departure signals the flight of beauty and youth, "Beauty had gone; youth had gone" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 145), is echoed in Trout's cries, fifty years later. Trout: a science fiction writer published in pornography; Kilman: a history expert spouting her wisdom to a single student. The two characters, written in starkly different times and places by two very different authors, are so much alike. Both repulsive in many ways, both independent intellectuals, both

operating on the margins of society, Kilgore and Doris are two enduring examples of outsiders who long to be part of the society they claim to abhor, who long to start again.

As I struggled to find a thesis topic—to remember why exactly I'd decided to write about Virginia Woolf—I kept coming back to Miss Kilman. Though Kilgore and Doris are the strange and the forgotten in their stories, they are, to me, the characters who make literature interesting.

And every profession is open to the women of your generation, said Miss Kilman.

—Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (149)

## Introduction

### Contemporary Changes: Turning to Face the Strange

Virginia Woolf, who had an aversion to introductions herself, is surprisingly difficult to introduce<sup>1</sup>. The smooth fluidity of her prose and her often-casual tone belie the very purposive approach of a self-conscious artist. Woolf's reputation outside of the text further complicates the subtlety of her work: she is at once critic and author, lady and scholar, humanitarian and snob. Herta Newton chooses to invoke a rather ghostly image to describe Woolf's ability to remain aligned with progressive and traditional times: "Both in theory and practice Woolf hovers in some halfway region between past and present" (ix). "Hovering," however, seems somewhat reductive. Woolf is quite grounded in her contemporary struggles—thriving on the multiplicity of her identity—and looking toward the future.

Woolf and her vision of the future are, nevertheless, indebted to the theories of the past. Writing in a time of literary experimentation, Woolf embraced a realism that rebelled against the ordered, predictable approach of even her most recent predecessors. She boldly and directly critiqued the technique of the period through her fiction and her essays: "The literary convention of the time is so artificial [...] the strong are led to destroy the very foundations and rules of literary society" (Woolf, *Brown* 84). Yet the rebellion against Victorian and Edwardian vestiges was by no means a simple matter of putting down the old and picking up the new. As Woolf looked toward what she saw to be the possibility of a new genre, she battled the skepticism of the critical present and shouldered the weight of the literary past.

---

1. Woolf's "An Introduction to *Mrs. Dalloway*" opens with the line: "It is difficult—perhaps impossible—for a writer to say anything about his own work" (548). She repeats this sentiment in her introduction to *Life As We Have Known It*.

The demand for change in the literature of the period parallels a more widespread call for social reform. As Woolf balances between literary genres, she also creates characters striving to exist in the midst of similar societal upheavals. While the ease and the power of hindsight gloss such social and cultural transformations into generational divisions, Woolf and her work exemplify the often-forgotten intergenerational women: pioneers who are tied to the past, aware of the future, and cognizant that others will be handed what they fight to achieve. Weaving the world of fiction so closely to her contemporary time, Woolf, and her crusade for modernism, bring to light both the inequalities of society and the possibility for social change.

One frequently overlooked character speaks directly to Woolf's recognition of new ideals in literature and society as well as to the subsequent struggle change brings: Doris Kilman. Though she is a marginalized character in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Miss Kilman is given a sharply critical eye. She sees the changes for women quickly approaching, but also recognizes that the new generation came a little too late for her to benefit. A struggling character in one of Woolf's most mature works, Miss Kilman is a complex representation of Woolf's successful literary style as well as the difficulty of social change.

Miss Kilman not only embodies the struggles of contemporary women, but she also speaks to the struggles of the working class. Alienated from the Dalloway household, openly disgusted by their extravagance, Miss Kilman is explicitly aligned with the poverty of the underclass. Yet Miss Kilman is once again in an intermediary state. Just as she is not definitively part of a generation, she is not unequivocally part of the underclass. Although she is working, she is neither a member of the serving class (as she certainly does not associate with the Dalloways' maid or cook) nor a working-class woman who slaves away in appalling conditions. Instead, a working woman with the luxury of an upper-class education, Miss Kilman straddles

the social hierarchy of the period. She bridges the working and middle classes—the established and progressive generations—in much the same way that Woolf bridges Edwardian and modernist convention.

The opening chapter of my thesis explores the literary battle between Edwardian and modern realism. Using the somewhat personal debate between Arnold Bennett and Woolf, I will discuss not only Woolf's brand of modernism, but also the duality of her approach: the inevitable connection to Edwardian conventions in even the most modern of efforts to violate grammar and disintegrate syntax (Woolf, *Brown* 84). By focusing on the critical essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," I emphasize Woolf's desire to "express character" (75), to prominently explore and give a unique, idiosyncratic voice to the individual.

Chapter Two is a close reading of *Mrs. Dalloway's* Miss Kilman, arguing that Woolf has achieved the standard put forth in her essay and has effectively created the internal world of an individual character. Though Miss Kilman is often overlooked by critics and defined in terms of her obsession with Elizabeth Dalloway, I argue that Elizabeth is a specific tool for Doris. It is, instead, Clarissa who is more emotionally invested in Miss Kilman. As Miss Kilman uses Clarissa and Edwardian conformity to define herself, shades of Bennett and Woolf's mutual dependence are implicitly refigured in Clarissa Dalloway and Doris Kilman's love-hate dynamic. Miss Kilman is therefore presented, in some respects, as a fictional counterpart to Woolf's struggles in the literary realm: articulating the societal equivalent of the literary transformation. While Miss Kilman is certainly not the fictional representation of Woolf herself, Doris, nonetheless, offers parallels to Virginia Woolf as she, too, exists on the border between generations.

In the final chapter, Miss Kilman continues to be explored as an intermediary figure. In the context of class divisions, she highlights the limitations of Woolf's style as much as she exemplifies it. While Miss Kilman fulfills Woolf's vision of characterization, the often negative and condescending depictions of the working and the serving classes demark two separate modes of character drawing. Even as Woolf strives for change, the evident inequalities of the period—the implicit recreation of social hierarchies within *Mrs. Dalloway* and other fictional pieces—prevent an unencumbered embrace of Woolf's vision.

As Woolf states in her introduction to *Mrs. Dalloway*: “[N]othing is more fascinating than to be shown the truth which lies behind those immense facades of fiction—if life is indeed true, and if fiction is indeed fictitious. And probably the connection between the two is highly complicated” (549). It seems unlikely the connection could be anything but complicated. Fiction, however, offers a space for exploration and experimentation. The possibility of change begins in the seemingly unfettered world of art. Both Woolf's conception of modernism and her failure to completely realize the entirety of her ideals offer a fascinating glimpse, one way of synthesizing the connection between fiction and life, literature and history, art and society.

## Chapter One

### Miss Kilman, Mrs. Brown, and Arnold Bennett: Character Development

The people in [modern novels] do not sufficiently live, and hence they cannot claim our sympathy or even our hatred: they leave us indifferent. —Arnold Bennett, *Evening Standard*, 2 December 1926

In Arnold Bennett's review of *Mrs. Dalloway*, he continues to wage his bitter war against the validity of modernism, jabbing Woolf where it hurts the most: character development. Perhaps Woolf does not portray the setting at the superficially descriptive level Bennett prefers. Perhaps Bennett interprets Woolf's delicate weaving of past and present as a maze of temporal confusion. These stylistic preferences are certainly understandable. But ineffectual, lacking characters? Woolf's desire to abandon the predictable, imposed order of Victorian and Edwardian prose does not lead the reader further away from the character. Woolf, instead, hopes that her writing will bring the audience closer to the fleeting essence of human nature. Shifting the focus of an author's work, Woolf viewed modernism as a reaction to Victorian and Edwardian style as well as a responsibility to move beyond stereotypical characters toward the true representation of human beings.

When placed beside the hefty Victorian tales written just a few decades earlier, *Mrs. Dalloway* is decidedly different. Epitomizing many aspects of Woolf's personal approach to writing as well as modernism as a genre, *Mrs. Dalloway* confidently flouts traditional rules. The refusal to follow a clearly-dictated, linear path; the apparent disregard of temporal constraints—even the flexibility of once steadfast syntactical rules—call attention to Woolf's self-conscious efforts to initiate change. Though Woolf is willing to reform convention, her decision to forgo perceived hallmarks of tradition, to eliminate extraneous and detailed conjectures made by



omniscient narrators, is not necessarily a sacrifice: "Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" (Woolf, *Fiction* 106). Modernism is, instead, a more selective method of conveying reality, a method more conducive to capturing the authenticity Woolf desires.

Woolf's non-fiction, her essays and her reviews, continue to depict this quest for authentic fictional voices both within the immediate texts as well as within the literary tradition. Woolf pointedly declares in her essays "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and "Modern Fiction" that the modernist style and subsequent reformations spring, at least partially, from a backlash against Victorian and Edwardian frameworks. The sheer density of descriptive passages in Victorian fiction, the unbridled enthusiasm for vivid portrayals of teacups and drawing rooms, overwhelms the reader, often displacing the centrality of the characters. Though Woolf recognizes the richly psychological aspects of George Eliot's novels and the tension of Jane Austin's depictions, the characters nevertheless share the stage with descriptive minutiae. As Susan Dick notes, not only does Woolf take the selective eye of modernism as one of her "firmest assumptions," but also declares that the "choices novelists make should evolve from a shift of focus so that 'life' is conveyed not only in its external aspects, but as it is experienced" (*Realism* 50).

Picking and choosing external details that elucidate more than mere setting, Woolf's attention and precision effectively coalesce into her new perspective. Controlling the audience's eye with care, Woolf refuses to distract the reader, aligning the sight of the text with the sight of the character. The stream of consciousness style of *Mrs. Dalloway* evinces Woolf's careful direction. As Miss Kilman "[stands] on the landing" just outside of Clarissa in the drawing

room, Doris notes “[t]hey had expensive things everywhere; pictures, carpets, lots of servants” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 135). Instead of interpreting this description as a generalized overview, the reader implicitly mimics the path of Miss Kilman’s point of view, both her physical gaze and her psychological musings. Miss Kilman does not have a taste for luxury; she would not differentiate between the style of carpet or the quality of picture. Miss Kilman prefers to view the vastness of the Dalloway’s wealth as despicable. Taking the entryway apart piece by piece, noting the fine curve of the banister or the gold stitching along the rug, does not interest her in the slightest. It is important only that she is relegated to the landing. As Miss Kilman’s disgust boils, the narrative moves inward: “[Mrs. Dalloway] came from the most worthless of classes—the rich, with a smattering of culture. They had expensive things everywhere [...] She considered that she had a perfect right to anything that the Dalloways did for her” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 135). From the external reality of the Dalloway’s home, Woolf shifts to the internal reality of Miss Kilman’s self-righteous anger, neatly interspersing observations of the two worlds.

Woolf’s vision, however, and the definition of modernism are hardly resolved. Responding to the ongoing debate between the techniques of the “new school” and the tools associated with the established literary tradition, Bennett singles out Woolf as the leader, the “champion of this younger school,” weaving into his short review of *Mrs. Dalloway* a remarkable amount of sheer disgust:

As regards to character-drawing, Mrs. Woolf (in my opinion) told us ten thousand things about Mrs. Dalloway, but did not show us Mrs. Dalloway. [...] Nor could I see much trace of construction, or ordered movement toward a climax, [...] further, I thought that [the book] seriously lacked vitality. (190)

Though Bennett attacks the title character, his complaint rings true for all personae. In Woolf's telling "us ten thousand things," a mosaic is created and a fragmented image of the character surfaces. As E.M. Forster, a more sympathetic contemporary, comments on the same issue of "character-drawing": "Virginia Woolf would do away with the sense of pacing. The pictures and windows may remain if they can—indeed the portraits must remain—but she wants to destroy the gallery in which they are embedded [...]" (*Survey* 177-178)<sup>1</sup>.

In order to convey the strands of memories and the patchwork of emotions that construct an individual outside of textual constraints, the author must somewhat resign him or herself to a style of free association within the text. One's life does not have a specified beginning, middle and end, why should fictional personae conform to this unrealistic ideal? As Woolf delineates it in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown": "[W]e must reconcile ourselves to a season of failures and fragments. We must reflect that where so much strength is spent on finding a way of telling the truth the truth itself is bound to reach us in rather an exhausted and chaotic condition" (86). Miss Kilman is at once a sympathetic teacher, alone in the stairwell, and a grotesque monster, grasping for Elizabeth Dalloway. A traditional portrait of Miss Kilman would not suffice. Woolf does not "show," as Bennett seems to use the definition of the word, with an unveiling of a neat, symmetrical painting. She instead depicts segments of Miss Kilman's life and thoughts. Showing Miss Kilman in a different manner, Woolf demonstrates the chaotic truth of the character through the precarious link between the internal and the external identities of Miss Kilman.

---

1. Herta Newman in *Virginia Woolf and Mrs. Brown: Toward a Realism of Uncertainty* interprets Forster's praise as evidence that Woolf has in fact returned to the Edwardian form, especially when compared to her more radically modern characters in *Jacob's Room*: "Woolf is of course acutely aware of the connection between life and fiction, her concession to traditionalism proves highly effective. [...] If Forster's grudging praise is any proof, the Edwardians have been vindicated" (44).

The foundation of Bennett's ideals—the cohesive definition of showing—is grounded in an Edwardian and Victorian background. Rejecting Woolf's stylistic innovations almost entirely, pausing momentarily in the closing paragraph of his review to compliment Woolf's "brief passages [...] so exquisitely done that nothing could be done better" before concluding that "a few fine minutes is not enough" (190), Bennett fervently conveys his argument. Yet, regardless of Bennett's firm beliefs, by refusing to acknowledge the merits of the budding style of modernism, his critical assessment turns into a misguided attempt to read the structure and the accomplishments of a Georgian novel as an inadequate version of Edwardian conventions. No recognition of Woolf's efforts to alter the presentation of fiction ensues. No acknowledgment that the nonlinear plot structure, the transformation of traditional portraits, all move toward a new understanding of literature.

*Mrs. Dalloway* is not a detail-oriented, plot-driven "ordered movement toward a climax." That's the point. Fragmentation and circularity are self-conscious aspects of a new method. The generations proceeding the early twentieth century have been more than proficient in practicing the art of minutiae; mere detail is no longer enough. Physical description cannot be what the writer is striving for—the "proper stuff of fiction" (Woolf, *Fiction* 106). Outlining her vision of Georgian writing in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf states her desire to alter the purpose of writing, making it a new method for representing reality. While she accepts the accomplishments of such close predecessors as Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells, she emphatically states that since the times are changing, the form of writing must follow: "And so [the Edwardian writers] have developed a technique of novel-writing which suits their purposes; they have made tools and established conventions which do their business. [...] For us those conventions are ruin, those tools are death" (Woolf, *Brown* 80).

The foundation of Bennett's ideals—the cohesive definition of showing—is grounded in an Edwardian and Victorian background. Rejecting Woolf's stylistic innovations almost entirely, pausing momentarily in the closing paragraph of his review to compliment Woolf's "brief passages [...] so exquisitely done that nothing could be done better" before concluding that "a few fine minutes is not enough" (190), Bennett fervently conveys his argument. Yet, regardless of Bennett's firm beliefs, by refusing to acknowledge the merits of the budding style of modernism, his critical assessment turns into a misguided attempt to read the structure and the accomplishments of a Georgian novel as an inadequate version of Edwardian conventions. No recognition of Woolf's efforts to alter the presentation of fiction ensues. No acknowledgment that the nonlinear plot structure, the transformation of traditional portraits, all move toward a new understanding of literature.

*Mrs. Dalloway* is not a detail-oriented, plot-driven "ordered movement toward a climax." That's the point. Fragmentation and circularity are self-conscious aspects of a new method. The generations proceeding the early twentieth century have been more than proficient in practicing the art of minutiae; mere detail is no longer enough. Physical description cannot be what the writer is striving for—the "proper stuff of fiction" (Woolf, *Fiction* 106). Outlining her vision of Georgian writing in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf states her desire to alter the purpose of writing, making it a new method for representing reality. While she accepts the accomplishments of such close predecessors as Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells, she emphatically states that since the times are changing, the form of writing must follow: "And so [the Edwardian writers] have developed a technique of novel-writing which suits their purposes; they have made tools and established conventions which do their business. [...] For us those conventions are ruin, those tools are death" (Woolf, *Brown* 80).

Woolf's near manifesto clearly remains in the minds of her contemporaries. Bennett's explicit reference to the movement-defining essay in his review of *Mrs. Dalloway*—"I do, however, remember an article of hers in which she asserted that I and my kind could not create character" (189)—points to the overall impact of her proposal as well as the more specific, unresolved issue of realistic character creation. Bennett and his "kind" versus Woolf and her "kind" seem to stand at uncompromising ends of the stylistic spectrum. Entangled in the question of how to produce effective characterization, beyond personal slights and dramatic gestures, is the more pressing issue of understanding the relationship between Victorian realism and modern realism.

Throughout her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf uses the persona of Mrs. Brown to illustrate the fundamental differences in writers' stylistic approaches and, ultimately, their rendition of character. Mrs. Brown is a "very clean, very small," older woman who happens to have shared a carriage with Woolf (74). First describing the general situation, Woolf then leads the audience through the techniques of successful Edwardian writers. Eventually arriving at Bennett, Woolf simultaneously highlights his "powers of observation [...], his sympathy" and his denial of Mrs. Brown's humanity:

[Mr. Bennett], indeed, would observe every detail with immense care. He would notice the advertisements; the picture of Swanage and Portsmouth; the way the cushion bulged between the buttons; how Mrs. Brown wore a brooch which had cost three-and-ten-three at Whitworth's bazaar [... but] we can only hear Mr. Bennett's voice telling us facts about rents and freeholds and copyholds and fines [...] Mr. Bennett has never once looked at Mrs. Brown in her corner [...] never at her, never at life, never at human nature. (78, 80)

Though this type of realism has value, it cannot be said to capture the character of Mrs. Brown—at least not in the way Woolf would like. Moving away from the “enormous stress upon the fabric of things” (81), Woolf protests that Mrs. Brown is an individual, “life itself” (87), and proposes to reveal each character through his or her own thoughts: an internally focused version of materialist realism.

The difficulty of capturing the essence of a human being—this desire for inward realism—hardly needs to be stated. But beyond the intricacy of the vision of modernism, Woolf and writers of her period are also grappling with the weight of literary tradition. Bennett appears to view the stance of the younger generation as a complete rejection of their predecessors: “The new practitioners have simply returned to the facile go-as-you-please methods of the eighteenth century, ignoring the important discoveries and innovations of Balzac and later novelists” (190). The relation of the emerging style, however, to earlier models is much more complex. Exploring the duality of Woolf’s realism, Dick points to Woolf’s ability to use physicality sparingly in order to transcend the superficial aspects of the present: “Woolf’s attention to [...] numerous details of ordinary reality provides the solid base upon which speculations about other dimensions of reality may rest” (*Realism* 57). Just as Mrs. Brown remains in her carriage, wearing her threadbare coat while worrying about her future, Miss Kilman walks to the Stores with Elizabeth while simultaneously battling the sting of Clarissa’s humiliation. Woolf inverts the assumed role of detail: daily life is a tool for the deeper exploration of an individual’s mind and emotions—not an end in itself. Detail is neither eliminated nor overdone. Though the stream of consciousness method of *Mrs. Dalloway* quickly moves the reader from the mind of one character to the next, Miss Kilman is nevertheless wearing her distinctive green mackintosh

and “swallow[ing] down the last inches of the chocolate éclair, then wip[ing] her fingers, and wash[ing] the tea round her cup” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 144) in a rather Victorian manner.

Woolf delicately combines the Victorian and the modern mode of representation, remaining “particularly indebted” to aspects of the Victorian era, the Victorian writers, and the Victorian style (Whitman 152): “[Though Woolf] moves further away from writing ‘exteriorly,’ she could not abandon material reality, for it is an integral part of the other, more profound, reality she wished to explore” (Dick, *Realism* 71). While Woolf may choose to distance herself from the approach of Bennett and Wells, she takes care neither to reduce the writings of previous generations nor place modernism on a pedestal: “We do not come to write better; all that we can be said to do is to keep moving, now a little in this direction, now in that, but with a circular tendency should the whole course of the track be viewed from a sufficiently lofty pinnacle” (Woolf, *Fiction* 103). Avoiding an imposition of a hierarchy or even the notion of linear progress toward a particular goal, Woolf gracefully bridges the gap between forms.

The pattern of grappling with generational disjunction is prevalent in Woolf’s essays as well as her fiction—most notably in Doris Kilman’s displacement and isolation. Woolf, as an author struggling to achieve an alternative form of literary understanding through a hybrid of fictive conventions, parallels the difficulties of her fictional persona. Miss Kilman, though a character in a novel, battles against the expectations of societal tradition. Both Miss Kilman and Woolf seem to struggle against the standards of the majority. The social reform during Woolf’s period, the class tension, and (with the power of hindsight) the imminence of governmental shifts during the composition of *Mrs. Dalloway* (Zwerdling 146), all contribute to the pervasive theme of change. In the abstraction of literary debate and on the pages of the text, Woolf is in the midst of transformation as a new generation emerges.



Woolf is not, however, alone in this literary reformation and is certainly not lacking supporters or admirers. E.M. Forster's decidedly more encouraging survey of Woolf's work, published in the same year as Bennett's tirade against her character development, again points to the issue of a dual methodology: "[T]he problem before her—the problem which she has set herself, and that certainly would inaugurate a new literature if solved—is to retain her own wonderful new method and form, and yet allow her readers to inhabit each character with Victorian thoroughness" (*Survey* 176-177). A writer and fellow member of the Bloomsbury group, Forster is conscious both of the difficulties of writing in the modernist style as well as of the attempts made by Woolf's peers. Choosing to emphasize Woolf's stylistic innovations, Forster places her on a dais of sorts, praising her ability to go beyond merely relaying character thoughts: "to convey the actual process of thinking [...] I know of no one except Virginia Woolf who has accomplished it" (*Survey* 176).

Struggling throughout the writing of *Mrs. Dalloway* to achieve the level of authenticity she desires, Woolf records, during the drafting process, the very breakthrough Forster pinpoints in the finished piece. Attempting to flesh out her characters, to achieve Forster's goal of "Victorian thoroughness," Woolf incorporates a variety of temporal dimensions while remaining rooted in the present. Though Clarissa only physically leaves her home briefly to buy flowers, much of her narrative is located at Bourton, remembering Sally and Peter. Similarly, Miss Kilman's memories and past experiences—her bitterness toward the Dalloway's, her career ending decision to remain sympathetic to the Germans—shape her present. As Woolf strove to get "the element of time into the book through the characters' memories," she simultaneously succeeded in solving "the main problem [...] of making her characters four-dimensional" (Showalter xxviii). Though Woolf was undoubtedly influenced by Proustian technique and the

work of her contemporaries such as T.S. Eliot and James Joyce (Dowling 11), she describes her own “discovery” as that of “dig[ging] out beautiful caves behind my characters” (Woolf, *Diary* 263). Using temporal multiplicity and breaking formal barriers, Woolf creates psychological complexity—allowing personal histories and present struggles to be relayed directly to the reader. A sense of freedom is subsequently created for Woolf: “The concept of tunneling into ‘caves’ behind characters enfranchised her from the unwanted linear structure in which an omniscient narrator moves from points A to B” (Lee, *Dalloway* 16). Instead of relying on the voice of a Mr. Bennett to speculate about the price of her brooch, Mrs. Brown will be able to speak for herself.

The “beautiful caves” of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the quest for the individuality of Mrs. Brown highlight the integral part character development plays in Woolf’s style of writing. Interestingly enough, Woolf composed sections of “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” while writing *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the transcribed edition of the British Museum’s manuscript of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Helen M. Wussow alludes to the “additional textual layers, namely the several reviews and essays Woolf was writing simultaneously with her novel” (xv):

Woolf worked on “The Hours” [working title for *Mrs. Dalloway*] and *The Common Reader* concurrently, as is dramatically evidenced by the essays interspersed among the scenes in the manuscript. [...] On folios 22 and 23 of notebook 2 is a portion of the familiar “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” [...] (xv)<sup>2</sup>

The proximity of Woolf’s explicit methodology and her fictional endeavors emphasizes the self-consciousness of her writing. Woolf’s ability to construct multi-dimensional characters speaks to her new brand of realism and her desire to give a voice to the previously unheard—the Miss Kilmans and the Mrs. Browns.

---

2. Please see Appendix A for a section of Wussow’s transcription.

When Woolf and Bennett finally meet, in a scene depicted in Woolf's essay, "Am I a Snob?" they encounter each other at an elegant dinner party and are introduced by the glittering hostess. After a moment or two of awkwardness, they "s[it] down together and talk[...] and g[et] on very well indeed" (190). Their literary battles dissolve into small talk; their differences are diminished. Though Woolf advocates for a section of the underrepresented population, desiring to expand realism and include marginalized voices, the dissonance between Woolf and greater segments of society is nevertheless evident (and decidedly more pronounced than her rivalry with Bennett). Not only are Woolf and Bennett allowed access to the world of wealth and opulence, but they are also in the midst of the intellectual elite. Regardless of their desire to do society justice by employing the best method of literary representation, both Bennett and Woolf live quite apart from the average person. If Woolf is to alter convincingly fictive convention, her fictional representation of reality must meet the demands of her essays; they must delicately straddle the boundaries between Woolf's realm of established gentry and Mrs. Brown's threadbare existence.

## Chapter Two

### The Neglected Miss Kilman

Lesser figures like Richard Dalloway or Lady Bruton or Miss Kilman, that grimly pathetic vampire, do well enough in outline [...] —Unsigned Review, *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 May 1925

Doris Kilman. The parallel to a “grimly pathetic vampire” is not necessarily hyperbolic. The frustrated forty-year-old reaching desperately for the youth of Elizabeth Dalloway, “suck[ing] up half our life-blood” as Clarissa Dalloway remarks to herself, is not, however, merely the “outline” of a “lesser figure” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 13). Miss Kilman—never addressed as Doris, often simply called the genderless Kilman—is often interpreted as reinforcing a theme surrounding another figure.<sup>1</sup> Though Miss Kilman is inextricably connected to her fellow fictional personae, she does not represent a lower form of characterization. The very fact that Miss Kilman’s role lends itself to such a wide variety of readings indicates the complexity of her constructed psychology, earning her the right to be studied as a complete, consequential character. As David Dowling notes in his discussion of Miss Kilman and Dr. Bradshaw, “Miss Kilman *is* an individual full of contradictions, try as she might to be a theory” (80, emphasis in original). It is this individuality that deserves attention.

Reductive readings of Miss Kilman stem from the obvious fact that she is an outsider. Not a mysteriously alluring outsider, Miss Kilman is a marginalized figure, habitually out of place. She is presented as homely and awkward from the start. Before the reader is even

---

1. Readings of Miss Kilman as a dramatic foil are wide-ranging: Emily Jenson’s depiction of Miss Kilman’s desire for Elizabeth as simply a metaphor for Clarissa’s past; David Dowling’s mention of Miss Kilman mimicking Lady Bruton, pushing gender bounds, is coupled with his connection between Miss Kilman and Dr. Bradshaw and their support of cultural institutions; Alex Zwerdling’s view that Miss Kilman is also a war victim and subsequently paired with Septimus Smith; the list goes on.

allowed to enter Miss Kilman's mind, Clarissa, on her way down Bond Street, mentally lists the alienating features of her daughter's tutor:

Year in year out [Miss Kilman] wore that [green mackintosh] coat; she perspired; she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority, your inferiority; how poor she was; how rich you were; how she lived in a slum without a cushion or a bed or a rug or whatever it might be, all her soul rusted with that grievance sticking in it, her dismissal from school during the War—poor embittered unfortunate creature! (Woolf, *Dalloway* 12)

Standing in Clarissa's hallway, much later in the story, Miss Kilman's disjunction is reiterated. Intellectually at odds with Elizabeth Dalloway's parents and operating in a starkly different financial realm, Miss Kilman is also a physical blight on the supremely manicured stairway: "Yes, Miss Kilman stood on the landing, and wore a mackintosh. [...] She was poor, moreover; degradingly poor. [...] S]he stood on the soft carpet, looking at the old engraving of a little girl with a muff" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 135; 136). Her utilitarian mackintosh is in sharp contrast to the delicate muff; her poverty stands out against the luxury. Doris does not belong.

Grappling with Miss Kilman's displacement and the broader disjunction of post-war England, Woolf attacks the social hypocrisy of the era with a "sharply critical" approach (Zwerdling 145)<sup>2</sup>. Writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, as Alex Zwerdling notes, on the brink of significant political shifts toward welfare socialism and the Labor party, Woolf softens her perspective though a self-conscious stance: she "deliberately look[s] at [the period] from the inside" (145).

---

2. In Sean Latham's discussion of snobbery "*Am I a Snob?*" *Modernism and the Novel*, he questions Zwerdling's assertions: "Having granted Woolf the privileged position of social critic, however, [Zwerdling] then simply rejects her openly confessed infatuation with the upper classes [...]" (60). Interestingly enough, Latham footnotes a more positive perspective tracing the argument to E.M. Forster and Edward Said: "[Woolf's] courage as an intellectual lies in her ability to reject social norms in defense of truth" (60).

Woolf captures the difficulty of moving away from Victorian values—social mores that marked her own childhood—through the psychology of her characters, specifically using Miss Kilman to embody intergenerational confusion. Unable to conform completely to the expectations of her age and knowing the hope of the new generation of women is unavailable to her, Miss Kilman is clearly displaced. Childless herself, Miss Kilman sees possibility in the young Elizabeth. Continually reminding her student that “every profession is open to the women of your generation” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 149), Miss Kilman highlights for Elizabeth social changes and subsequent opportunities. She simultaneously mocks Clarissa’s idleness and the wealth associated with the Dalloways: “[Clarissa] came from the most worthless of all classes—the rich, with a smattering of culture” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 135). Standing in the midst of change, but also in the shadow of the established gentry, Miss Kilman struggles to survive. Clinging to her flimsy hybrid of values, she voices both her personal pain as well as aspects of Woolf’s own changes during the period.

Though Woolf is undoubtedly able to identify with the upper-class life of the Dalloways, she also recognizes that this narrow stratum of society is “hopelessly out of step with its time” (Zwerdling 148). While Woolf’s private life, her constant brushes with the social elite, appear to mirror Clarissa’s aristocratic ways, Woolf is also a working publisher and critic. She is a daring artist—pushing the borders of conventionality and pressing against the confines of her social role—making Miss Kilman, perhaps less obviously, an expression of Woolf as well:

[Woolf] can neither accept her position nor believe in her fulfillment and trust her society to make choices adequate for her to realize her human potential. Instead she sees herself as an outsider, a woman without a country, who wishes and hopes to live apart from

Victorian society's restrictions and the value system upon which they are based. (Reese 75)

Writing a character who literally does not have an affinity for her country—Miss Kilman loses her job and subsequently her career because she refuses to adhere to England's political stance in World War I<sup>3</sup>—Woolf empathetically explores the difficulty of Miss Kilman's pioneering role.

Part of Woolf's identity, both her public association with the Bloomsbury group and her private struggles with the changing value system of her period, is to embrace a deviant status, a pioneering role of her own<sup>4</sup>. Explicitly stating in *Three Guineas* what is implied through Miss Kilman, Woolf draws a link between outsider status and social change. As Naomi Black notes, "Feminists who read *Three Guineas*, wrote and asked if they were 'outsiders.' Of course, responded Virginia Woolf, who felt herself to be one. She also made it clear that she thought of the women's movement as a first approximation to the Outsiders' Club" (193). As both a writer and an activist, Woolf embraced a moderately marginalized position.

An advocate of social feminism, Woolf was a proponent not only of women's rights, but also a supporter of greater, humanitarian changes: "Virginia Woolf thus pushed the ideas of the social feminists to their natural conclusion, the transformation not just of women's role, but also of society and finally of men" (Black 193). Though her record in the suffrage movement itself was somewhat spotty—she volunteered briefly in 1910 for the People's Suffrage Federation (Black 185)—Woolf visualized a broader restructuring of society. Her four-year commitment to the Women's Co-operative Guild, inviting her literary friends to speak at monthly meetings, as

---

3. Woolf and her circle of friends also opposed World War I: "Many of Virginia's friends became involved in the work of the opposition movements. Lytton Strachey and Bertrand Russell were particularly visible opponents [...]" (Lee, *Woolf* 340).

4. Latham elaborates aspects of Woolf's struggles, including a certain amount of loyalty to the current social system that values and preserves her art (67).

well as Woolf's own speeches highlight the integration between her authorial talents and activism<sup>5</sup>. In addition to carefully crafted speeches, Woolf's novels, grounded in turmoil of contemporary London, continue the connection between the literary and the political aspects found in her life.

While Woolf and her character Miss Kilman share, to a certain extent, an outsider perspective and political consciousness, traces of the author's life are found in every character.<sup>6</sup> The inevitable connection, however, between Woolf and two contrasting representations of women from her own generation seems to reinforce the textual bond between Clarissa and Miss Kilman. In fact, the strongest, the most intense link Miss Kilman has to another figure in the novel is her relationship with Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa's wandering thoughts in the final pages of the text exemplify her need for Miss Kilman, the physical response—the “rush”: “the little girl with a muff brought back Kilman with a rush; Kilman her enemy. That was satisfying; that was real. [...] She hated her: she loved her” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 191). In turn, Miss Kilman's emotional responses to Clarissa share similarly uncontrollable bursts: “[Miss Kilman] had, as a matter of fact, very nearly burst into tears when Clarissa Dalloway laughed at her” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 141). Their battle is the only mutual emotional investment Miss Kilman experiences during the novel—a more truthful relationship than her romanticized attraction to Elizabeth.

The Clarissa-Doris exchanges are also brutal reminders of Miss Kilman's perceived inadequacy. The inner turmoil and the continual attempt to validate her worth are exemplified in the use of emotionally defensive techniques. Breaking down intense moments, Miss Kilman consciously focuses on sterile, intellectual thoughts. After another humiliating exchange with

---

5. Woolf speeches to the Women's Institute in Brighton and the London and National Society for Women's Service were noted in Herimone Lee's extensive biography (*Woolf* 590, 721).

6. Lee's biography also traces probable inspirations for the characters of *Mrs. Dalloway*, mentioning Katherine Mansfield as the model for Clarissa Dalloway (395) among others (243).



Clarissa, Miss Kilman forces herself to remain in the present, blocking out even the most immediate past: "[...S]he would think of something else; she would think of Russia; until she reached the pillar-box" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 141). Miss Kilman is trying to maintain her precarious sense of self. Emily Jenson's claim that "the real guilt Kilman fosters in Clarissa is her awareness that she has denied herself exactly what she sees Kilman living out, and in her own house, the citadel of respectability" (175) overlooks these unsuccessful moments of Miss Kilman's denial of conformity. While Jenson sees Miss Kilman's defiance of norms as an insult to Clarissa's submission to social expectations (174), the pain and the repression evident in the thoughts of Miss Kilman blur the simplistic categorizations. Clarissa may be misled by Miss Kilman's outward appearance, but no reader of Doris's thoughts could view her life as a success.

A common reading of the love-hate struggle between Clarissa and Doris nevertheless views the bond solely from Clarissa's perspective. Miss Kilman turns into a mere reminder of the past: Clarissa and Sally Seton's adolescent love affair is refigured in Miss Kilman and Elizabeth's partnership. While Elizabeth Abel effectively incorporates Freudian theory into her reading of Woolf's narrative structure, her conclusion that "Elizabeth's relationship with the grasping Miss Kilman is the modern counterpart to Clarissa's love for Sally Seton" (124) feels inadequate. Doris Kilman, nearly Clarissa's age, is supposedly in love with a seventeen-year-old girl—a child who could have just as easily been her own daughter. The lopsided obsession initiated by Miss Kilman is a mirror to Clarissa and Sally's teenage romance in gender only. The Kilman-Elizabeth pairing operates on a much deeper level for the character of Miss Kilman. A desperately lonely woman, Miss Kilman has interactions with Elizabeth that are not reminiscent of those of star-crossed lovers'; they are painful conversations overflowing with self-hate and unfulfilled desire.

Doris and Clarissa's side-by-side expressions of dissatisfaction result from starkly different social positions and are colored by more than mere personal preference. Clarissa's lamentations indicate she has made a clear choice to abandon the intellectual budding of her youth; she has chosen Richard Dalloway over Peter Walsh: conservative over radical, stable over adventurous. The regret Clarissa feels, on the morning of her party, is not a regret about what never could have been, but, rather, what almost was. Clarissa's musings reflect her disappointment: " 'This is what I have made of it! This!' And what had she made of [her life]? What, indeed? sitting there sewing this morning with Peter" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 46). While Clarissa battles to understand her choices and respective degrees of conventionality, Miss Kilman's struggle is outside of this spectrum.

Miss Kilman, like Clarissa, has presumably been indoctrinated with the Victorian value system. But, unlike Clarissa, she does not marry and submit to lady-hood. That, however, does not mean that Miss Kilman would give up the chance to experience conformity. Her inability to conform is not a personal choice, but is founded in her poverty and her gender. Clarissa's wealth is ensured through marriage. Miss Kilman must work to survive. The constraints of the period and her subsequently limited opportunities for employment remove any choice of obtaining the material comforts of the upper class, of becoming a lady. While she can alternatively conform to spinsterhood, Miss Kilman's desire to be wanted prevents any such resignation. It is this longing for others, the longing for the appearance of normalcy, that complicates Miss Kilman's psychology. If she had unhesitatingly embraced her outsider status—both her financial limitations and her solitude—she would be worthy of an "outline," belong to the category of "lesser characters." It is her jealousy, her mangled pity, and her desire to be loved that keep her suspended between old-fashioned and modern. Miss Kilman's situation is not dependent upon

her own actions; it is the antithesis of Clarissa's reminiscing. Instead of turning inward to rehash past choices, Miss Kilman must look outward, seeing Elizabeth as a symbol of hope.

Elizabeth Dalloway embodies all that Miss Kilman desires and all that is now impossible for her to obtain. The intensity of their interactions derives from Miss Kilman's acute awareness that Elizabeth will eventually leave, both figuratively and literally. Feeling herself pitted against Clarissa in a war for Elizabeth's affections, Miss Kilman also knows that time is fleeting and desperately reaches for Elizabeth. Despite her attempts during tea together, the unreciprocated "grasp" and desire to "clasp" Elizabeth fail (Woolf, *Dalloway* 144), ending in her departure and Miss Kilman's double-pronged pain. Not only has Doris been unable to procure Elizabeth for herself, but Clarissa has also won: "Mrs. Dalloway had triumphed" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 145).

Hermione Lee, instead of viewing Miss Kilman's grasping as a means of survival, reads it as merely another repulsive attribute: "Miss Kilman, through emphasis on her ugliness, her mackintosh, her greed and her lust for possession, [turns] into nothing more than a great hand opening and closing on the table" (Lee, *Dalloway* 28). But, the "great hand" of Miss Kilman is not only passively "opening and closing on the table," it is also reaching for Elizabeth. Unwittingly, "[I]like some dumb creature who has been brought up to a gate for an unknown purpose, and stands there longing to gallop away" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 145), Elizabeth embodies Miss Kilman's second chance. A second chance at life, Elizabeth is, perhaps, Miss Kilman's first chance for love, romance, and sex. Regardless of Elizabeth's actual intellectual prowess, regardless of whether she rejects elite society, regardless even of the fundamental differences between Elizabeth and Doris's personalities and upbringings, Miss Kilman sees Elizabeth as an opportunity. Elizabeth's presence sustains the fantasy of an idealistic second life and her absence results in symbolic death: "One had to pay at the desk, Elizabeth said, and went off,

drawing out, so Miss Kilman felt, the very entrails in her body, stretching them as she crossed the room, and then, with a final twist, bowing her head politely, she went” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 145). The metaphorical death of Miss Kilman, the seeming end to the relationship, is, however, not the loss of love, but the loss of a self-love. It is the chance of renewal that leaves with Elizabeth: “Elizabeth had gone. Beauty had gone; youth had gone” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 145). Elizabeth as an individual is not mourned. Miss Kilman, instead, misses the abstractions of beauty and youth.

Viewing Woolf’s vivid imagery of Miss Kilman’s disembowelment as a particular fictive technique, Judy Reese and her interpretations of Woolf’s characters can be applied to Miss Kilman’s desire for Elizabeth and metaphorical death:

To escape the (con)text of culture, Woolf’s fictional characters experience several different types of ‘death’ states ranging from sensations associated with sleep, trances, visions, preconceptual experiences, vicarious identifications with the dead, and actual death experiences. By engaging in these unconscious, preconscious, or vicarious experiences Woolf’s characters hope to escape their empirical entrapment and gain a vantage point apart from the cultural context. (103)

Unlike Clarissa—endlessly replaying her past, trying on various levels of agency and re-decision—the inflexibility of Miss Kilman’s position and particular path of socialization do not offer comfort or possibility. “Vicarious identification” is the only coping strategy available to Miss Kilman. She has the future to look forward to, but not even her own: Elizabeth’s.

The tense moments of excruciating pain during afternoon tea with Elizabeth exemplify the difficulty of Miss Kilman’s role as an intermediary between generations of shifting values. Though Miss Kilman uses her relationship with her student to meet a specific psychological

need, she is forced to seek out such a mismatched partnership because conventional companionships are nearly impossible. Not only is Miss Kilman unable to find a personal relationship, but she is also unable to cultivate satisfactory relationships through any cultural institution. Susan Searles' analysis, "Why all the Crying in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*?" begins to uncover the underlying cause of Miss Kilman's emotions:

Although [Miss Kilman] holds a university degree, she has been relegated to the inferior position of a governess teaching history in a private home. And although she is an independent and radical thinker, she becomes a scapegoat, an alienated outsider, because she has openly expressed her pacifist, nonviolent sympathy towards the Germans. Full of justifiable loneliness and bitterness, Doris Kilman seeks her only release in the safety of cloistered tears (188). (116)

Rejected by the intellectualism that had promised a steady career, Miss Kilman can find refuge only in Elizabeth and a few conveniences: "except for Elizabeth, her food was all that she lived for; her comforts; her dinner; her tea; her hot-water bottle at night" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 141). Except, that is, until she discovers Reverend Edward Whittaker and religion<sup>7</sup>.

Shedding her "cloistered tears" in Westminster Abbey, Miss Kilman finally finds a method of conformity that *must* allow her to partake. She subsequently aligns herself with the power and security of this strong cultural institution. But religion is a poor substitute for the fulfillment of more immediate desires; love as faith, love for a distant, unreachable God cannot replace the love and physical presence of another human being. Just as the hope of Elizabeth dangles before her, Miss Kilman's prayers in the abbey promise a transcendence that will never arrive. Her inability to convincingly participate in the rituals of faith indicates her personal

---

7. It is interesting to note that Miss Kilman's conversion to the Church of England followed her service in the Quaker community: "Mr. Dalloway had come across [Miss Kilman] working for the Friends" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 135).

incongruence with the tenets of Christianity and the institution's failure to offer psychological comfort. Miss Kilman's emotional needs remain unmet; she continues to be an outsider: "Mr. Fletcher, retired, of the Treasury, Mrs. Gorham, widow of the famous K.C., approached Him simply, and having done their praying, leant back, enjoyed the music (the organ pealed sweetly), and saw Miss Kilman at the end of the row, praying, praying, and, being still on the threshold of their underworld [...]" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 146-147). Forever on the "threshold of their underworld," Miss Kilman shows a devotion to God that has the same hollow ring as the touting of her "historical mind" and her love for Elizabeth (Woolf, *Dalloway* 13).

In addition to Miss Kilman's inability to cultivate friendships and her awkward attempts at religion, Woolf hints at why Miss Kilman has been so repulsive to characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* and critics alike, why she has remained on the margins of all communities: she suffers from the "infliction of her unlovable body which people could not bear to see" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 141). Is that it? Miss Kilman is just ugly? Hardly a justifiable reason for banishment from a modern reader's point of view. But the Victorian model of women, the lingering and ethereal image—even when recognized as a two-dimensional stereotype—makes Miss Kilman aware of her physical deficiencies: "Do her hair as she might, her forehead remained like an egg, bald, white. No clothes suited her. She might buy anything. And for a woman, of course, that meant never meeting the opposite sex. Never would she come first with any one" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 141). Once again, Miss Kilman hovers between generations. The impossibility of meeting the criteria for motherhood and wifedom based on the remaining Victorian conventions and the simultaneous difficulty of immersion into the career-oriented, performance-oriented world leaves Miss Kilman on the outside.

Miss Kilman's negative critical reception, the parallel to a "grimly pathetic vampire," and desperate image—her grasps at Elizabeth, at God, at any comfort, cerebral or material—is the culmination of multiple rejections and deficiencies. Struggling with a set of gendered social expectations, struggling with an inability to conform, struggling with a squelched rebellion and career, frustrated, "unlovable" Doris is marked by the chaotic pull between modernity and tradition. Articulating the complex relationship between social strata and female roles against the backdrop of contemporary London, Woolf's figure is in a uniquely intermediary position. Embodying the dissonance of a society not quite prepared or willing to accept a radical, intelligent female and an increasing demand for recognition of all forms of working women, Miss Kilman seems doomed to outsider status. Regardless of her repulsive attributes, Miss Kilman is a complex character; she certainly reaches the level of idiosyncrasy Woolf touts in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." Yet such differentiation seems sparingly given to personae outside of Woolf's personal understanding or, more specifically, to members of the working class. Is Miss Kilman simply an exception?

## Chapter Three

### Mrs. Woolf, Miss Kilman, and Working Women: Understanding the Unknown

Instead of lying on a sofa—‘My mother is resting,’ Elizabeth had said—she should have been in a factory; behind a counter; Mrs. Dalloway and all the other fine ladies! —Doris Kilman (Woolf, *Dalloway* 136)

Woolf’s desire to create realistic fiction is, arguably, the focus of her innovative style of modernism. Chasing “the essential thing [...] whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality” (Woolf, *Fiction* 105), Woolf labors to portray the individuality of her characters. Though Bennett callously rejects her rhetorical techniques and her intentionally non-linear structure within the text, Woolf’s quest is further compromised by textually external constraints. As a prominent intellectual, living among artists and writers, Woolf’s personal experience—just as any author’s—is necessarily limited. While the imagination of the author strives to overcome an individual perspective, is empathy enough to render true character? Can Woolf realistically identify with Mrs. Brown or is her vision simply the latest form of authorial imposition?

Admittedly, Woolf did not have a trouble-free existence. Debates about sexual abuse and eating disorders<sup>1</sup> continue to rage. Her mental illness, the death of close family members, and eventual suicide (though certainly no longer contentious subjects) are indicative of her mental and emotional suffering. Combined with a sheltered life in the Stephen home, the explicitly gendered expectations of a Victorian childhood, and the social hierarchies of adulthood, Woolf has a particular identity or lens for viewing herself and the social world. A versatile, accomplished writer, Woolf achieves an impressive range of both subject matter and voice, but

---

1. Allie Glenny’s *Ravenous Identity: Eating and Eating Distress in the Life and Work of Virginia Woolf* discusses Woolf’s relationship with food—her portrayal of meals and cooking in fiction as well as her refusal to eat during the various stages of her breakdowns—and the possibility of an eating disorder.



the limitations of her portrayals are linked to the bounds of her personal experience. Her portraits of working women, simultaneously restricted by her self-embraced snobbery and deepened by her forays into teaching, mirror Woolf's position in society and unquestionably mimic the hierarchical categorizations of the period.

Woolf's elitism is not easily reduced. The shocking excerpts from her letters and fiction that open Lee's essay "Virginia Woolf and Offence" certainly unsettle the image of Woolf as a brave advocate of social feminism. The entire page of class-ist, racist, anti-Semitic dialogue and private commentary is a powerful rhetorical strategy for Lee, heightening the intensity of Lee's eventual defense and subsequent embrace of Woolf's multiplicity: "I want to *praise* her for her malice, and to see it as a vital aspect of her energy and style" (144, emphasis in original). Refusing to ignore the unpleasantness of Woolf's comments, Lee effectively recognizes the historical and the biographical aspects of Woolf's perspective. She applauds the astuteness of Woolf's vision while also noting, "as a reader, as a writer, as a person, she is, also, always locked inside herself" (146).

As a "locked" individual, Woolf points to bounds in her own life as a method of distancing herself from the reputation of Bloomsbury snobbery, and, instead, identifying herself with the struggle of all women. Woolf's education, though filled with upper-class advantages, was nevertheless starkly different from her brothers' and other male counterparts. As Beth Rigel Daugherty notes in her discussion of Woolf's early education and teaching position at Morley College<sup>2</sup>, Woolf's unstructured learning experience was double-edged: "On the one hand, then, Virginia Stephen received an extraordinary education, tailor-made for her chosen profession [...]. On the other hand, she received a terrible education: erratic, narrow, and lonely" (127).

---

2. Morley College was an adult-education facility. As Daugherty notes, it was "one of the several institutions of higher education for the working classes" (130).

Woolf rather self-consciously exploits the erratic, informal aspects of her education—pressing the reasonableness of her suffering when placed in context. As Lee wryly states, Woolf often used the method of her schooling as a means of securing identification with women outside of her class: “Citing, as always, differences in education and the wealth of men and women, [Woolf] argues in her reply to [Desmond MacCarthy and his review of “The Leaning Tower”] that this difference cuts across class” (Lee, *Offence* 137). While Woolf sympathetically gestures toward the working class, her sincerity is rarely straightforward and her understanding is often ambivalent.

Needless to say, the image of young Virginia, snuggled with a book in her father’s library, does not seem quite comparable to the image of working-class children forced to forgo formal education because they “could earn a few extra shillings a week” for their families (Daugherty 128). Daugherty, though emphasizing the isolating aspects of Woolf’s education, explicitly states that: “no matter what its ultimate strengths and weaknesses [Woolf’s education] provided her with no preparation to teach at Morley College [...and] also gave her no understanding of the working classes” (127). Woolf’s decision to instruct at Morley College, throws her rather helplessly into not only the realm of teaching, but also into an entirely different social realm.

Although the comments in her letter and her diaries during this short experiment of teaching are, again, somewhat condescending<sup>3</sup>—both implicitly and explicitly riddled with class divisions—Woolf does reach beyond her stable social circle: “Virginia Stephen [...] goes across the bridge [Waterloo Bridge], a significant passage in London at the time” (Daugherty 130, emphasis in original). Furthermore, Daugherty argues, Woolf seems genuinely to “forge a link

---

3. Lee’s biography of Woolf pulls explicit depictions of the working class from both Woolf’s fiction and private writing (218, 742).

with others trying to educate themselves; they, too, are outsiders, having been excluded from a good education" (130). While the level of "exclusion from a good education" is a rather subjective measurement, Woolf is nevertheless expanding her understanding of the working class as well as the role of the educator. In addition to the immediate effects on Woolf's perception, Lee notes the lingering aspects of this experience: "[Teaching] was never a great success, but it provoked some crucial ideas about class and education, and found its way twenty years later into *Mrs. Dalloway*" (Lee, *Woolf* 218). Evidenced by her portraits of educators Isabel Pole and Doris Kilman, and the depiction of a more wide-ranging class spectrum—making characters "critics of the society in that [they are] excluded by it" (Lee, *Dalloway* 28)—the shadows of Morley College remain with Woolf.

The depiction of Isabel Pole is even more marginalized than the portrait of Miss Kilman, yet it is Miss Pole who comes closer to echoing Woolf's experience. Romanticized not only by Septimus Smith's passion, but also by the intellectual awakening of Smith, Woolf seems to relive her teaching memories through Miss Pole in their purest, most idealized form:

It has flowered; flowered from vanity, ambition, idealism, passion, loneliness, courage, laziness, the usual seeds, which all muddled up (in a room off the Euston Road), made [Smith] shy, and stammering, made him anxious to improve himself, made him fall in love with Miss Isabel Pole, lecturing in the Waterloo Road upon Shakespeare. (Woolf, *Dalloway* 93)

Though only briefly described, Smith's devotion is steadfast, a "red gold flame infinitely ethereal and insubstantial over Miss Pole" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 93). The angelic, floating image of Miss Pole is a sharp contrast to her educational counterpart, Miss Kilman; the student worshipping the teacher is a clear inversion of Miss Kilman reaching for Elizabeth. While never explicitly stated,

the nature of Miss Pole's role—so similar to Woolf, possibly also a voluntary position—also suggests an upper-class complement to Miss Kilman's humble, poverty-stricken means.

Though Miss Pole may be volunteering, like Woolf, Miss Kilman is clearly working to support herself. Admittedly, not a typical working woman of the Co-operative Women's Guild—a felt hat maker, a field hand, or a plate-layer's wife<sup>4</sup>—Miss Kilman offers a link between Woolf and the women of the working class. If, however, there is a class division between these two figures, should Miss Kilman's grotesqueness be interpreted as merely an elaborate form of more blatantly degrading remarks about the working class? Lee does not deny the repugnance of Kilman, but, instead, reads the characterization as a socially-conscious depiction:

It is more convincing to argue that the 'monstrosity' of Doris Kilman is not the expression of personal spite against a fictional character, but the recognition of a women's character distorted and made ugly by lack of opportunity, mean social conditions, and exactly the sort of class prejudice which Virginia Woolf is being accused of, but which is, in fact, the subject of her novel. (136)<sup>5</sup>

The power given Miss Kilman, her declaration that “[Clarissa] should have been in a factory; behind a counter; Mrs. Dalloway and all the fine ladies!” (Woolf, *Dalloway* 136), does not appear as “personal malevolence” against Miss Kilman, but against Woolf herself and the members of her elite circle (Lee, *Offence* 135).

---

4. These professions are of women depicted in *Life As We Have Known It*, a memoir of working women discussed later in the chapter.

5. Lee's reaction to the negative portrayal of Miss Kilman and the subsequent correlation of Miss Kilman to the working classes, stem from an argument proposed by John Carey in *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (cited in Lee's critical essay).

While Miss Kilman's portrait is certainly not out of Woolf's breadth of empathetic understanding, she also represents the limitations of Woolf's effective portrayals of working women. Miss Kilman, regardless of her working status, remains a part of the upper-class sphere, treated as Clarissa's peer. The difficulties in Woolf's characterizations are more prominent along lines of traditional social divisions: namely, the rift between the upper and serving classes. Lee's reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* goes so far as to note the visual representation of the separate classes: "the way the party starts in the servants' quarters, and moves up the stairs, sets it in its full triviality against the world of the 'lower classes' which Virginia Woolf (though never very realistically) likes to use as a contrast to the world of the 'gentry' " (Lee, *Dalloway* 28).

The portrait of Lucy, the Dalloway's maid, in the opening pages of *Mrs. Dalloway* exemplifies Woolf's apparent struggles, her "never very realistic" portrayals of the serving class. It is an outsider's guess at the inner workings of Lucy's mind. Instead of first-person memories and observations, Lucy is depicted, parenthetically, as desiring nothing more than to be Clarissa Dalloway during the approaching party:

(And Lucy, coming into the drawing-room with her tray held out, [...t]hey would come; they would stand; they would talk in the mincing tones which she could imitate, ladies and gentlemen. Of all, her mistress was loveliest [... Lucy] was Lady Angela, attending Princess Mary, when in came Mrs. Dalloway.) (Woolf, *Dalloway* 41)

The unexpected insincerity of Lucy's almost infantilized depiction seems very unlike Woolf and her stereotype-defying search for true individuals. This pattern, however, of representing servants or women far removed from the upper-class sphere in a different style is nevertheless an undercurrent of her work.

A similar depiction of servant life appears in Woolf's unpublished sketch "The Cook." Caricaturing her former family cook Sophia Farrell, Woolf writes of Biddy Brien and her straightforward ways. Emphasizing Biddy's adherence to social customs and tradition, Woolf simplifies her internal struggles: "[Biddy] almost broke her heart for the handsome postman. [...But] she hadnt [sic] her married lines," (Dick, *Cook* 137)<sup>6</sup>. Continuing to adhere to her Irish heritage, Biddy miraculously saves enough money from her meager salary to plan a pilgrimage to Italy: "[Biddy] was a Catholic. She was going to Rome to see the Pope," (Dick, *Cook* 137). While the sketch is in many ways endearing and, arguably, a tribute to Sophie, it is nevertheless distant. As Dick insightfully notes: "Writing as a member of the Savery family, the narrator of 'The Cook' [...] makes no attempt to portray Biddy's inner life; her history, her saying, and her actions define her character" (131). Though the characterization of Biddy is undeniably from an outsider's perspective, an easy co-existence and generalized reciprocity between servant and master is nevertheless implied: Biddy's "room is hung with photographs. Her mind is like a family album" (139). Biddy belongs; she is part of the family. While Dick emphasizes that Woolf "believed this barrier" between classes to be "'impassable,' [...i]t is the bond rather than the barrier that Woolf stresses in 'The Cook' " (Dick, *Cook* 125).

It is, indeed, difficult to decipher a singular meaning in Woolf's texts. Lee notes the "ambivalence, self-consciousness, and self-contradictions in—for instance—[Woolf's] behaviour to and feelings about her servants," as an aspect of Woolf's "double-ness" (*Offence* 136). Woolf's simultaneous reputations, her literary duality, all contribute to a nearly indecipherable complexity. Even the notion of two differing modes of characterization is not a definitively class-based category. Eve M. Lynch explores a thought-provoking, alternative use of Lee's

---

6. Dick includes a transcription of the sketch, based on two separate drafts, at the end of her critical essay. She cites the University of Sussex Library, Manuscript Section, Monk's House papers, for her reprinted version.

suggestion of double-ness in "The Cook, the Nurse, the Maid, and the Mother: Woolf's Working Women," attempting to reconcile Woolf's contradictions through a positive, uniting perspective.

Highlighting differentiation between professions not as a class-based categorization, but rather as a maternal spectrum, Lynch examines the inverse relationship between articulate, independent women and their maternal accomplishments. Though Lynch addresses characters such as Mary Datchet and Sally Seal, Miss Kilman certainly exemplifies this analysis as well: "outside the maternal realm and in the male world—workers [...] acquire articulated thoughts and independent judgment, but at the expense of domestic articulation" (74). Lynch, however, does not stop at the exploration of the diverging modes of representation; she also identifies the unspoken connection *between* women, the "sisterhood of swishing skirts" (71). Although a hierarchy is maintained, Lynch points to the "almost undifferentiated unity between Clarissa and her servants" (70). Expanding Lynch's theory to include lateral relationships among women, unity can be seen not only across classes, but also within classes:

Nevertheless [Lady Bruton's] inquiry, 'How's Clarissa?' was known by women infallibly to be a signal from a well-wisher, from an almost silent companion, whose utterances (half a dozen perhaps in the course of a lifetime) signified recognition of some feminine comradeship which went beneath masculine lunch parties and united Lady Bruton and Mrs. Dalloway, who seldom met, and appeared when they did meet indifferent and even hostile, in a singular bond. (Woolf, *Dalloway* 116)

Though animosity remains between the two upper-class women, the unalterable fact of shared gender, and, subsequently, a shared perspective, creates a "singular bond." Woolf depicts an underlying female identity, almost a secret language, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, even as she seems to recreate the class divisions of the period.

Woolf may have had difficulty identifying with the working women living in her own home, but nevertheless would have respected Lynch's sense of sisterhood as a shared struggle against an imposed patriarchy. Margaret Llewelyn Davies collection of memoirs written by working women of the period indicates, however, that the working class was battling a different, a more violently oppressive form of "masculine lunch parties." The life of the working woman was far removed from the luxury of being a voluntary teacher, the luxury of planning parties, and even the luxury of declaring that "all the fine ladies" should be working, too. The collection, titled *Life As We Have Known It*, offers a glimpse into the lives of people who lived and worked alongside Woolf, but tended to remain invisible to the upper classes. In her introduction to Davies' compilation of essays and personal histories of members of the Co-operative Women's Guild, Woolf blatantly displays her initial repulsion. Accepting the invitation with obvious trepidation, Woolf nevertheless continues. Framing the introduction as a private letter and focusing on her recollections of Guild life, Woolf uses her personal experience as a starting point for understanding the unknown aspects of the Guild members' lives<sup>7</sup>.

Depicting her own frustration, Woolf immediately recognizes her detachment from the Guild gathering at hand: "If every reform they demand was granted this very instant it would not touch one hair of my comfortable capitalistic head [...] I am a benevolent spectator. I am irretrievably cut off from the actors" (xix). As an educated woman of comfortable means, not only is Woolf immune to the physically taxing aspects of the life of the working woman, but also somewhat immune to the actual reforms proposed. Articulating the powerlessness of the crowd at the Co-operative Women's Guild's conference, Woolf bluntly states: "all those women who

---

7. Latham points to Woolf's use of the epistolary form in *Three Guineas*, offering an argument that is applicable here: "Rather than claiming [...] false universalism [...] Woolf] uses the form of the letter to identify herself as an heir of the upper middle class possessed of a unique economic and intellectual freedom" (112).



worked, who bore children, who scrubbed and cooked and bargained, there was not a single woman with a vote. [...] The thought was irritating and depressing in the extreme" (xix).

While Woolf's life would not be greatly altered by shorter workdays or maternity care, she still articulates the same emotions of the Guild women: frustration, anger, and helplessness. Instead of walking out of the convention, Woolf chooses to stay, watching the procession of speakers.

As Woolf moves through her recollections, she gradually refutes the simplicity of her own initial categorizations. Woolf (in her notoriously ambivalent way) depicts not only what is unknown to her, but also the idealistic hope of an alliance:

In consequence [the women of the Guild's] bodies were thick-set and muscular, their hands were large, and they had the slow emphatic gestures of people who are often stiff and fall tired in a heap on hard-backed chairs. [...] Thus if it were possible to meet them not as masters or mistresses or customers with a counter between us, but over the wash-tub or in the parlour casually and congenially as fellow-beings with the same wishes and ends in view, a great liberation would follow, and perhaps friendship and sympathy would supervene. How many words must lurk in those women's vocabularies that have faded from ours! How many scenes must lie dormant in their eye which are unseen by ours! (Woolf, *Life* xxii; xxvii)

The rough depiction of "them" from a lady like Woolf seems condescending regardless of her intention.<sup>8</sup> The implication that the rest of society has moved ahead of the working class, even in terms of vocabulary, is, however, tempered by recognition that without social custom, "friendship and sympathy would supervene." Ending her piece strongly, declaring the memoirs

---

8. Woolf made revisions of her initial letter of introduction based on Llewelyn Davies concern it "might offend members of the Guild" (Dick, *Cook* 125).

have “something of the accuracy and clarity of a description by Defoe” (xxxviii), Woolf concludes with a sympathetic, admiring view<sup>9</sup>.

By including Defoe and classic literature, Woolf highlights the issue of education, a prevalent theme throughout the memoirs. It is, indeed, not only the “singular bond[s]” of gender, but also the experience of self-education (often, for working women, after endless days of labor) that connect the two divergent worlds of Woolf and working women. As Mrs. F.H. Smith, one contributor to the collection, indicates, education was often sacrificed to meet more practical needs: “I am not much of a scholar as I had to leave school at an early age owing to my father not being in regular employment,” (Davies 67). But education and the drive to experience literature did not stop when formal institutions were abandoned. While Mrs. Wrigley’s sentiment is often echoed—“I can’t say that I have read many books as I have had no time” (Davies 66)—the collection concludes with lists of “books read by various guildswoman” (Davies 114). The varied titles and topics alongside the voices of women telling of their struggles and hardships provide Woolf a point of identification with the women who initially felt so distant. Utilizing her love of literature and her own fragmented education, Woolf evidently rethought the bounds of her personal experience. As Dick notes, after the introduction to *Life As We Have Known It* and *The Waves*, Woolf turned to a different style of writing: “Another aspect of her shift [...] was her apparent interest in expanding the range of character types in her fiction” (Cook 129).

---

9. Woolf’s admiration is evident in her adaptation of sections of the memoirs. Dick points to the influence of the Guild’s collection during this period of Woolf’s compositions: “It was also in the spring of 1929 that Woolf was asked by her friend Margaret Llewelyn Davies if she would write an introduction to *Life As We Have Known It* [...] Reading these memoirs by women who were Sophie’s contemporaries and whose life stories in some ways echoed Sophie’s may have played some part in writing of ‘The Cook’ ” (128). Dick also footnotes, what she believes to be, explicit references to the Guild’s memoirs in her transcription of “The Cook.”

The fluctuations of Woolf's portrayals—the rejection of the rigid past, but the inability to completely identify with working women of the present—continue to encapsulate the issue of intergenerationality. Woolf's failure to fully realize the vision of Mrs. Brown for the women of the Co-operative Guild is as significant as her ability to capture the essence of Miss Kilman. The social constructions outside of the text emerge within the text, in the confused and ambivalent state that characterized her period. Though *Mrs. Dalloway* and “The Cook” failed to capture the unknown world of a working-class woman, Woolf's desire for the voices of the marginalized to be heard prevailed: the working women literally spoke for themselves through their memoirs. While it is, perhaps, the bond of women-kind that initiated the greater need for sincerity in Woolf's fictional portrayals, it is not surprising that the legacy of social feminism—the bonds of gender—encouraged a responsibility regardless of class.

## Conclusion

### Social Revolutions: We All Want to Change the World

My professor commented on a paper I had written last year: "A good starting point for discussion (albeit with a little too much emphasis on Miss Kilman?)<sup>1</sup>. Miss Kilman has certainly moved out of the parentheses and to the center of my thesis, but remains a "good starting point" for understanding Woolf and her period. Doris effectively captures the difficulty of negotiating social changes. In the carefully constructed microcosm of Woolf's fiction, Miss Kilman is linked to the past and the present, the upper and the working classes, but remains a unique individual—revealed to the reader through her thoughts.

Woolf's desire for literary change parallels the social changes of her period. However, the complexities and differentiations in Woolf's representations of women indicate more than merely a parallel movement; the struggles against the norms of the period were recreated in her texts. While *Mrs. Dalloway* offers a critical look at the established gentry (predominately through the eyes of Miss Kilman), the criticism is tied to the embedded social roles of a middle-class life and, in some respects, hindered by the personal experiences of Woolf. However, this hindering—the inability to give a voice not only to Mrs. Brown and Miss Kilman, but also to Biddy Brien and Lucy—enables the reader to understand Woolf's present while simultaneously glimpsing her vision of the future.

As Forster notes in a speech delivered shortly after Woolf's death: "She felt herself to be not only a woman but a lady, and this gives a further twist to her social outlook" (*Woolf* 34). Fluctuating between identifying with the difficulties of working women and embracing her snobbery wholeheartedly, Woolf held apparently oppositional ideals in her personal identity, her

---

1. This comment was made on my paper titled "Virginia Woolf and Feminism," dated 4/21/03.

literary work, and her life. Yet Forster points to such apparent ambiguities not as faults, but as logical extensions of the social upheaval: "And [Woolf's] snobbery—for she was a snob—has more courage in it than arrogance. It is connected with her insatiable honesty, and is not, like the snobbery of Clarissa Dalloway, bland and filled and unconsciously sinking into the best armchair," (*Woolf* 34). Critiquing her own circle of society first, Woolf portrayed the possibility for change by beginning in the familiar and extending, or attempting to extend, to the unfamiliar.

The connection between art and society is undoubtedly complex. While art often offers freedom to express and experiment, that expression is rarely unfettered. Fiction, instead, is the place for the beginnings of social change, for the dreams of the author, even as it is marked by the boundaries of the period. These boundaries are, nevertheless, as revealing as the dreams. From Virginia Woolf to James Baldwin to Allen Ginsberg, fiction—poetry and literature—have offered social critiques not from a comfortable distance, but in the midst of difficult struggles. Fiction remains a space for possibilities to be tried and tested and, perhaps, a space for predicting what will soon occur.

## *Appendix A*

Wussow's transcription of Woolf's notebooks and overall manuscript of *Mrs. Dalloway* is precise, taking care to capture Woolf's continuous revision and reworking. Pages twenty-two through twenty-four of Woolf's original work (Wussow's pages 168-169) depict a section of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and *Mrs. Dalloway* side-by-side. Unfortunately, this copy is not as visually stunning as one may like. The proximity of the Woolf's non-fiction methodology and her creative endeavors into character development is, nevertheless, quite striking.

[Draft of "Character in Fiction," a paper read to the Heretics Society at Cambridge, 18 May 1924, and based on "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," *Living Age*, 2 February 1924. A longer, revised version was published in *Criterion*, July 1924, and appears as "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" in *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* (1950).]

20<sup>th</sup> May.

Emigration in short becomes largely Millicent <Lady> Bruton.

But it was necessary to write. And here Lady Bruton had no gift with the pen. One ~~★~~ letter to the Times, she used to say to Miss Brush, cost her more <effort> than to organize an expedition to central Africa, for which kind of work she was singularly fitted: ~~In her~~ From the depths of her weakness; After a morning's battle, beginning, tearing up, beginning again, she used to feel the futility of her own womanhood, as she felt it on no other occasion, & would turn gratefully to the thought of Hugh ~~Whit~~ Whitbread who possessed—no one could doubt it—the art of writing letters to newspapers: the Times.

{And so she was glad that he praised the soufflé; She could not help A being so differently constituted from herself could not be conjured had passions, which could not be one could not call simply greed, because after all they may be essential to its might be part of this gift. } And indeed Lady Bruton often suspended her judgement of men in deference to the mysterious accord, in which they stood, & no woman, to the apparently laws of the universe, so that it

somehow right—  
right relations to the  
world

Hugh wrote a hit her statement Richard & Hugh advised her, & Hugh wrote for her, she was sure of being in the right, in the queer way in which one ~~their~~ sex was right, & hers wrong. Therefore she was glad that Hugh Whitbread enjoyed the soufflé; <Therefore> She did not call Hugh greedy, because to enjoy the soufflé in that rapt manner might be part of the mysterious <the> gift. And she waited until he was really <at liberty> liberated from that the tyranny which, until he was smoking, to say, & she said it very begin, & she began very ~~ten~~ submissively to lay before them her difficulty.

## Works Cited

- Beatles. *Revolution*. 2003. 10 March 2004. <[http://www.asklyrics.com/display/Revolution\\_1\\_Lyrics/42704](http://www.asklyrics.com/display/Revolution_1_Lyrics/42704)>.
- Bennett, Arnold. *from* "Another Criticism of the New School," *Evening Standard*. *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975. 189-190.
- Black, Naomi. "Virginia Woolf and the Women's Movement." *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*. Ed. Jane Marcus. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983. 180-194.
- Bowie, David. *Changes*. 2001. 11 March 2004. <<http://www.azlyrics.us/63386>>.
- Daugherty, Beth Rigel. "Morley College, Virginia Woolf and Us: How Should One Read Class?" *Virginia Woolf and Her Influences: Selected papers from the seventh annual conference on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Laura Davis and Jeanette McVicker. New York: Pace UP, 1998. 125-139.
- Davies, Margaret Llewelyn, ed. *Life As We Have Known It by Co-operative Working Women*. New York: Norton, 1975.
- Dick, Susan. "Literary Realism in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, and *The Waves*." *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Sue Roe and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 50-71.
- . "Virginia Woolf's 'The Cook.'" *Woolf Studies Annual*. Ed. Mark Hussey. Vol. 3. New York: Pace UP, 1997, 122-142.
- Dowling, David. *Mrs. Dalloway: Mapping Streams of Consciousness*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991.



- Forster, E.M. *Virginia Woolf*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942.
- . "A Survey of Virginia Woolf's Work." *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975. 171-178.
- Glenny, Allie. *Ravenous Identity: Eating and Eating Distress in the Life and Work of Virginia Woolf*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Jenson, Emily. "Clarissa Dalloway's Respectable Suicide." *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*. Ed. Jane Marcus. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983. 162-179.
- Latham, Sean. "Am I a Snob?" *Modernism and the Novel*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003.
- Lee, Hermione. "Mrs. Dalloway." *Modern Critical Interpretations: Virginia Woolf's: Mrs. Dalloway*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. 15-35.
- . *Virginia Woolf*. New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1996.
- . "Virginia Woolf and Offence." *The Art of Literary Biography*. Ed. John Batchelor. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. 129-150.
- Lynch, Eve. "Circuits of Desire Constructing Female Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf: The Cook, the Nurse, the Maid, and the Mother: Woolf's Working Women." *Virginia Woolf: Themes and Variations: Selected papers from the second annual conference on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Vara Neverow-Turk and Mark Hussey. New York: Pace UP, 1993. 68-75.
- Newton, Herta. *Virginia Woolf and Mrs. Brown: Toward a Realism of Uncertainty*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1996.
- "A Novelist's Experiment," Times Literary Supplement. *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975. 160-162.

- Reese, Judy S. *Recasting Social Values in the Work of Virginia Woolf*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP, 1996.
- Rigel Daugherty, Beth. "Morley College, Virginia Woolf and Us: How Should One Read Class?" *Virginia Woolf and Her Influences: Selected papers from seventh annual conference on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Laura Davis and Jeanette McVicker. New York: Pace UP, 1998. 125-139.
- Searles, Susan. "The Gendered Gaze: Tourists, Voyeurs, Readers, Weepers: 'Accesses of emotion—bursting into tears'; Why all the Crying in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*?" *Virginia Woolf: Themes and Variations: Selected papers from the second annual conference on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Vara Neverow-Turk and Mark Hussey. New York: Pace UP, 1993. 113-118.
- Showalter, Elaine. Introduction. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Ed. Stella McNichol. London: Penguin, 1992. xi-xlvi.
- Vonnegut, Jr., Kurt. *Breakfast of Champions or Goodbye Blue Monday!* Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence. 1973.
- Whitworth, Michael. "Virginia Woolf and Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Sue Roe and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 146-160.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Am I a Snob?" *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. 182-198.
- . *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: 1920-1924*. Ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie. Vol. 2. London: Hogarth Press, 1978.
- . "*The Hours*": *The British Museum Manuscript of Mrs. Dalloway*. Trans and ed. Helen M. Wussow. New York: Pace UP, 1996.

- . Introduction. *Life As We Have Known It by Co-operative Working Women*. Ed. Maragaret Llewelyn Davies. New York: Norton, 1975.
- . "An Introduction to *Mrs. Dalloway*." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. Vol. 4. London: Hogarth Press, 1994. 548-550.
- . "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." *A Women's Essays: Selected Essays: Volume One*. Ed. Rachel Bowlby. London: Penguin Books, 1992. 69-87.
- . *Mrs. Dalloway*. Ed. Stella McNichol. London: Penguin, 1992.
- . "Modern Fiction." *The Common Reader: First Series*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1984. 146-154.
- Zwerdling, Alex. "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System." *Modern Critical Interpretations: Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. 145-164.