‘Mental fight’ and ‘seeing & writing’ in Virginia Woolf and William Blake

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Abstract

This thesis is the first full-length study to assess the writer and publisher Virginia Woolf’s (1882-1941) responses to the radical Romantic poet-painter, and engraver, William Blake (1757-1827). I trace Woolf’s public and private, overt and subtle references to Blake in fiction, essays, notebooks, diaries, letters and drawings. I have examined volumes in Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s library that are pertinent, directly and indirectly, to Woolf’s understanding of Blake. I focus on Woolf’s key phrases about Blake: ‘Mental fight’, and ‘seeing & writing.’

I consider the other phrases Woolf uses to think about Blake in the context of these two categories. Woolf and Blake are both interested in combining visual and verbal aesthetics (‘seeing & writing’). They are both critical of their respective cultures (‘Mental fight’). Woolf mentions ‘seeing & writing’ in connection to Blake in a 1940 notebook. She engages with Blake’s ‘Mental fight’ in ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ (1940).

I map late nineteenth and early twentieth-century opinion on Blake and explore Woolf’s engagement with Blake in these wider contexts. I make use of the circumstantial detail of Woolf’s friendship with the great Blake collector and scholar, Geoffrey Keynes (1887-1982), brother of Bloomsbury economist John Maynard Keynes. Woolf was party to the Blake centenary celebrations courtesy of Geoffrey Keynes’s organisation of the centenary exhibition in London in 1927.

Chapter One introduces Woolf’s explicit references to Blake and examines the record of Woolf scholarship that unites Woolf and Blake. To see how her predecessors had responded, Chapter Two examines the nineteenth-century interest in Blake and Woolf’s engagement with key nineteenth-century Blakeans. Chapter Three looks at the modernist, early twentieth-

century engagement with Blake, to contextualise Woolf's position on Blake. Chapter Four assesses how Woolf and Blake use 'Mental fight' to oppose warmongering and fascist politics. Chapter Five is about what Woolf and Blake write and think about the country and the city. Chapter Six discusses Woolf's reading of John Milton (1608-1674) in relation to her interest in Blake, drawing on the evidence of Blake's intense reading of Milton. Chapter Seven examines further miscellaneous continuities between Woolf and Blake. Chapter Eight proposes, in conclusion, that we can only form an impression of Woolf's Blake.

The thesis also has three appendices. First, a chronology of key publications which chart Blake's reputation as well as Woolf's allusions to Blake. Second a list all of Blake's poetry represented in Woolf's library including contents page. The third lists all the other volumes in Woolf's library that proved relevant. Although Woolf's writing is the subject of this thesis, my project necessitates an attempt to recover how Blake was understood and misunderstood by numerous writers in the early twentieth century. The thesis argues Blake is a model radical Romantic who combines the visual and the verbal and that Woolf sees him as a kindred artist.

Contents

Abbreviations

Full bibliographic details are provided at the end of the thesis.

Virginia Woolf

AROO	A Room of One's Own.
CH	Carlyle's House and Other Sketches
CSF	The Complete Shorter Fiction
D I–V	The Diary of Virginia Woolf
E I–VI	The Essays of Virginia Woolf
L I–VI	The Letters of Virginia Woolf
MB	Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings
MD	Mrs Dalloway
PA	A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals 1897–1909
RF	Roger Fry A Biography
TG	Three Guineas
TL	To the Lighthouse
W	The Waves

William Blake

CPPWB	The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake. David V. Erdman (ed.)
DC	A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures
J	Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion
L	Letters
Lö	The Laocoön
Marg.	Marginalia
MHH	The Marriage of Heaven and Hell
M	Milton a Poem in 2 Books.
N	Notebooks

OHV	On Homer's Poetry; On Virgil
Prospectus	P
SIE	Songs of Innocence and of Experience
VDA	Visions of the Daughters of Albion
VLJ	A Vision of the Last Judgement

Figures

Acknowledgements

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Kind and generous staff at the following archives all helped me access key original manuscripts: University of St Andrews Special Collections, the British Museum Print Room, the Fitzwilliam Museum print room, University of Reading special collections, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, and Kings College Archive Centre, University of Cambridge. Special thanks are due to Julia King and everyone at the special collections team at Washington State University for allowing me three full days of access to the library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf.

Without the support of my three supervisors, Jane Goldman, Rhian Williams, and Nigel Leask, this project would not have been possible. The international community of Virginia Woolf scholars was also always readily available to assist me in specific inquiries. I must also thank my family, especially my parents and grandparents who also made this project possible.

1: ‘Mental fight’ and ‘seeing & writing’

‘Mental fight’ and ‘seeing & writing’ are the two key phrases that the modernist writer and publisher Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) explicitly linked to the radical Romantic poet-painter, and engraver William Blake (1757-1827) in 1940. Both ‘Mental fight’ and ‘seeing & writing’ are central to her understanding of Blake’s remarkable imagination. She engages with Blake’s phrase ‘Mental fight’ in her highly political pacifist essay ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ (1940), and she refers to Blake and ‘seeing & writing’ in a notebook. Placed under the heading of her two possible working titles for a potential essay collection, ‘Reading at Random. Or Turning the Page’, her note describes Blake’s aesthetic of ‘seeing & writing.’[1] ‘Mental fight’ becomes part of Woolf’s public lexicon for pacifist argument, whereas the note on ‘seeing & writing’ is a private and personal thought which Woolf aims to develop in polished criticism. Though Woolf does not make an essay collection from these notes, two draft essays for the project survive: ‘Anon’ and ‘The Reader’ (1940). My thesis examines Woolf’s explicit and implicit allusions and references to Blake in essays, notes, fiction, diaries, and journals. This chapter introduces my primary evidence in the form of Woolf’s explicit references to Blake in her essays and notes. Then I examine the record of critical interventions that unite Woolf and Blake.

1.1 Woolf’s explicit references to Blake

‘Mental fight’ in 1940

Chapter Four of this thesis focuses on the essay ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ (1940) where Virginia Woolf writes: ‘“I will not cease from mental fight,” Blake wrote. Mental fight means thinking against the current, not with it.’ (E VI 243) [2] But here are some preliminary

[1] Brenda Silver, ‘“Anon” and “The Reader”: Virginia Woolf’s Last Essays’, *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 3/4, (Autumn-Winter, 1979), 356-441 (373).
[2] ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ was published in the New York Magazine, *New Republic*, (21 October 1940).

considerations of the key term 'Mental fight.' Woolf quotes a line from Blake's illuminated relief etching, printed from copper plates, *Milton a poem in 2 books* (1804): 'I will not cease from mental fight.' (CPPWB M 95).[3] Relief etching allows Blake to print text from the surface of a copper plate, using an etching press in his own home, thereby avoiding the need to share his poetic texts with a letterpress workshop. Relief printing had almost never been used before with copper plates. Wood is the more traditional material for printing text, hence Blake occasionally calling the technique in his notebook 'Woodcut on Copper' (CPPWB N 694). Traditionally, engraved or etched copper plates were printed from the intaglio, meaning the ink was held in the lines and pits cut below the plate surface. Relief etching uses the uncut or unworked plate surface as the support for the ink, just like woodcut. The term was used in early twentieth-century Blake scholarship making it appropriate for discussing Woolf's interest in Blake's visual and verbal art. [4] Printing from copper plates reverses the image, meaning that Blake had to etch the text onto the plate in reverse, from the right-hand side of the plate to the left. Blake's innovation earned him the reputation as 'great engraver' and printmaker.[5]

Blake includes a subheading on the title plate of *Milton a poem in 2 Books*, expressing an ambitious aim: 'To Justify the Ways of God to Men' (CPPWB M 95). He quotes from the first book of *Paradise Lost*: 'to the height of this great argument//I may assert eternal Providence, //And justify the ways of God to men.' [6] Blake attempts with this illuminated poem an imaginative exploration of how John Milton came to recognize his calling as the poet capable of writing *Paradise Lost* (1667). In Woolf's early twentieth-century context, this

[3] Throughout I use David V. Erdman's edition of the complete Blake: David V. Erdman, (ed.) *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. (Berkely: University of California Press, 2008). Abbreviated henceforward to CPPWB.

[4] See Sir Geoffrey Keynes, (ed.) *Bibliography of William Blake* (London: Chiswick Press for the Grolier Club of New York, 1921), pp.8-9.

[5] Anthony Gross, *Etching, Engraving, and Intaglio Printing* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 38.

[6] John Milton, *The Complete Poems and Prose* Merritt Y. Hughes (ed.), (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1957), p.212.

Miltonic context is often lost. The well-known Jerusalem hymn distances Blake's line, 'I will not cease from mental fight', from the original printed artefact. The Jerusalem hymn is not to be confused with another of Blake's illuminated works, *Jerusalem the emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804), a companion work to *Milton a Poem in 2 Books.*

Woolf's first audience were the American readers of *New Republic*, a left-wing journal printed in New York, but she writes 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid' in a British context in which the Jerusalem hymn is famous. After the Great War, the Jerusalem hymn becomes a feminist anthem, sung at suffragist meetings, but I show in Chapter Four that its earliest performances are warmongering in context.[7] In 1940, Woolf remembers that Blake's words were used for propaganda in 1916. As she writes 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', she worries it will happen again.

Despite the Jerusalem hymn's general renown in 1940, she explains Blake is her source for 'Mental fight' to claim pacifism will be countercultural: '"I will not cease from mental fight", Blake wrote. Mental fight means thinking against the current, not with it.' (E VI 243).Woolf might be diligently explaining her source for her American readers. More importantly though, she desires a return to the printed artefact of Blake's Miltonic text. Her explicit reference to Blake distances his words from the Jerusalem hymn, a song that is not entirely progressive, and not, necessarily, pacifist. Making sure Blake's words are recognized as pacifist requires a systematic rethinking of the Jerusalem hymn's emergence in 1916.

To understand 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid' we must understand Jerusalem is not Blake's title. He printed the four stanzas that comprise the poem, beneath the heading 'Preface', on the plate that opens *Milton a poem in 2 Books*. Some editions of Blake give

[7] Chapter Four develops an earlier essay in which I attempt to recover a nexus of Blake invocation in which Woolf's 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid' forms part: Michael Black, 'Mental fight': Woolf, Blake, and European Peace', in *Virginia Woolf, Europe, and Peace Volume 1: Transnational Circulations*, Ariane Mildenberg and Patricia Novillo-Corvalán, (eds.), (Clemson S.C: Clemson University Press, 2020), pp.85-100.

these four stanzas the title ‘And did those feet in ancient time’ which is the poem’s first line. For example, it was used as the title in *William Blake* (1925) printed as part of a series, the *Augustan Books of Modern Poetry*, available to Woolf in her library (see my second appendix). Woolf’s archived library also includes a copy of *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake* (1905), a miscellaneous selection of Blake’s work edited by John Sampson, with an introduction by the early twentieth-century literary critic Walter Raleigh. In this edition, Blake’s same four stanzas are entitled ‘From “Milton”: Preface’ which shows Woolf’s awareness of the original source for Blake’s Jerusalem hymn (see my second appendix).

There are only four extant copies of *Milton* (1804), none of which Blake prints identically. Only two of these, copies A and B, include the plate Blake entitles ‘Preface.’ Blake did not think his words on this plate would become famous. Less famous than the Jerusalem hymn, but just as important to the Blakean print context recovered in ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ is the passage of prose Blake printed on the same plate, above the poem. Beneath the poem and the prose, Blake printed a biblical line from Numbers book eleven, chapter 29: ‘Would to God that all the Lord’s people were Prophets’ (CPPWB M 96). ‘Mental fight’ is a biblical and religious term for Blake, made to be predominantly secular and pacifist when Woolf quotes it in 1940. In addition to changes to the meaning of Blake’s words between 1804 and 1940, we need to consider their shifting significance in Woolf’s own lifetime.

‘Seeing & writing’ and ‘Nin Crot & Pulley’ (1940)

Though it helps to address the phrases Woolf linked to Blake separately, they are also in complex constellation with each other. As indicated by my heading to this subsection, ‘seeing & writing’ and Woolf’s cryptic phrase ‘Nin, Crot & Pulley’ are closely related. In her 1940 note for ‘Reading at Random. or. Turning the page’, Woolf associates both with Blake:

> The connection between seeing & writing
> Michael Angelo. Leonardo. Blake. Rossetti.
> a twin gift. Wh. shall be born. depends on

Nin Crot & Pulley.'[8]

In the transcriptions of Woolf's draft essays 'Anon' and 'The Reader' that appear in the sixth volume of Woolf's essays, there is no mention of 'Nin Crot & Pulley.' However, in an undated typescript of 'Anon' in the New York Public Library, Woolf elaborates on what the phrase means:

> with? ~~But~~ the printing press ~~brought~~ came into existence forces that cover over the original song- -books themselves, and the readers of books. If science were so advanced that we could at this moment X ray the singers mind we should find a nimbus surrounding the song; a steeam of influences. Some we can name - - education; class; the pressure of society. But they are so many, and so interwoven and obscure that it is simpler to invent for them nonsense names- - - say Nin Crot and Pully. Nin Crot and Pully are always at their work, tugging, obscuring, distorting.[9]

Woolf's 1940 notebook expands on these artistic 'influences', adding 'affect', 'growth', 'surrounding' and 'inner current' to those above: 'education, class', and the 'pressure of society'. [10] Her note claims all such 'influences' have been 'left out' thus far from 'text books.' Woolf wants to grasp emotion and affect as transhistorical. Her 1940 notebook also mentions: 'certain emotions always in/being: felt by people always.'[11] Her draft of 'Anon', printed in the collected essays, explains: 'Everybody shared in the emotion of Anon's song, and supplied the story.' (E VI 581).

Since Woolf mentions Blake and 'seeing & writing' in the same notebook in which she tests ideas for 'Anon', she might think of Blake as a radical artist and poet-painter affected by the invention of the printing press. Paradoxically, while Woolf considers Anon and the oral poetic tradition Anon represents to be transhistorical, she entertains the notion that the printing press made consciousness of the transhistorical possible in the first place. She writes

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[8] Silver, '"Anon" and "The Reader", (377)
[9] Virginia Woolf, 'Typescript fragment of "Anon", with the author's ms. corrections, unsigned, and undated. 8p', pp.3-4, in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
[10] Silver, '"Anon" and "The Reader", p.374
[11] Ibid, p. 373.

in ‘Anon’ that the material publication of books exposed ‘a background of the past’ through ‘the man who first sees himself and shows himself to us.’ (E VI 584). Woolf wants to engage a tension between cultural forces affecting artistic production, and the individual will power of the individual artist. ‘Nin Crot & Pulley’ is the complex of forces created by this tension. It is Woolf’s term for a fundamental difficulty addressed in her late criticism.

When I quote from the typescript of ‘Anon’ in the New York Public library above, I preserve Woolf’s spelling to suggest she was thinking of a ‘stream of influences’, but also of an industrial ‘steam of influences.’ Though Woolf says ‘Nin Crot and Pulley’ are ‘nonsense names’, as my colleague Joshua Phillips has pointed out to me, these three terms appear in the English Dialect Dictionary, compiled by Joseph Wright between 1898 and 1905.[12] Woolf mentions Joseph Wright in her posthumously published novel-essay, *The Pargiters: the novel-essay portion of The Years* (1977).[13] Since Woolf takes these terms from Wright’s dialect dictionary, we need to consider their semantic meaning. We must take our definitions verbatim from Wright, rather than from the Oxford English Dictionary.

‘Nin’ is listed as Cornish dialect, a verb meaning ‘to drink’: ‘used chiefly towards children, in a coaxing way, to entice them to drink.’[14] One year before making her notes on ‘Nin Crot & Pulley’, Woolf is writing the autobiographical *Sketch of the Past* (1939), in which she reflects on her childhood families as part of the Stephen family in St Ives, Cornwall. Woolf perhaps remembers hearing this word ‘Nin’ in childhood. ‘Crot’ is listed as native to both Yorkshire and Cumbria dialects. A substantive generally denoting minuteness, it can mean ‘short person’, ‘crumb, fragment, broken piece; a small fragment or lump of any hard surface’ or

[12] Joshua Phillips’ doctoral project at the University of Glasgow is currently entitled: ‘In illness, with the police off duty’: *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of the Institution.*
[13] For the publication details of the first edition see *A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf: Third edition* B.J. Kirkpatrick, (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), p.109
[14] EDD online (Innsbruck Digitised Version of Joseph Wright’s *English Dialect Dictionary*, 1898-1905), [accessed 25/11/2021]

'piece, bit, atom.'[15] 'Pulley' is listed under Northumbrian and a few other dialects. In contrast to the two other words Woolf takes from Wright, it is quite widely used, due to its very specific, technical meaning. It describes 'pulley-frames', 'the gearing above a pit upon which the pulleys are supported', and 'pulley-legs': 'the "shear-legs" to which the pulley-frames are secured, and which support the weight of the pulleys and frames.' Since pulley has a technological and industrial significance, it makes sense to say Woolf was thinking about 'steam' as well as a 'stream of influences.'

The element of 'nonsense' therefore in 'Nin Crot & Pulley' is first and foremost the bringing together of these three terms, which have no singular discernible meaning as a complete phrase. In the typescript I cite directly above, Woolf writes that the 'original song' of an oral poetic tradition, which she believed to be embodied by the figure of 'Anon', was diminished by the printing press. Woolf is interested in the musical sound made by 'Nin Crot & Pulley' as well as what these three dialect words mean. 'Nin Crot & Pulley' evokes the lost 'original song' from a time when the artist was not affected by the dissemination of innumerable books and ideas. 'Nin Crot & Pulley' is this vast complex network of influences. It expresses the 'nimbus surrounding the song' that would be shown if we could 'X ray the singers mind.'

In the note that opens this subsection, Woolf posits a relation between an aesthetic subject, the 'connection between seeing & writing' on the one hand, and 'Nin Crot & Pulley' on the other. Woolf identifies four artists, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, William Blake, and Dante Gabriel Rosetti, who are all also poets. Of such artists, possessed of 'a twin gift' in the visual and verbal arts, Woolf states: 'Wh. shall be born. depends on Nin Crot & Pulley.' The intimate link between 'seeing & writing' and 'Nin Crot & Pulley' is straightforward: Woolf thinks the latter will determine the development of the former. This means either that 'Nin

[15] Ibid.

Crot & Pulley' determines whether an artist becomes a painter or a writer, and/or that it determines the exact approach the individual artist takes to realising their 'twin gift.' In Blake's case, it encourages an innovative hybrid combination of 'seeing & writing.'

Additionally, Woolf envisions her critical project, 'Reading at Random. Or Turning the Page', bringing together the visual and verbal arts. Her notes record a suggestion of two Bloomsbury painters, Woolf's sister Vanessa Bell and Bell's lover Duncan Grant, that she write a literary critical history in the form of a dialogue, 'from our common standpoint', that would appeal 'to painters.'[16] Using the 'writers angle', Woolf wants to understand a common 'desire to create' in painters and writers, thereby engaging bold ambitious subjects including the 'universality of the creative instinct' and the 'germ of creation.' [17] Woolf is interested in the aesthetics of 'seeing & writing', but also in scholarly and critical methods that bridge the visual and verbal arts.

Woolf's Blake sketches in 1904

While Blake's 'seeing & writing' explicitly interests Woolf in 1940, it is already a central concern of hers in 1904, the year when Woolf draws regularly for light distraction from writing. She copies images by Blake and the Pre-Raphaelite poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, mentioning both again in the 1940 note on 'seeing & writing.' Like many Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti modelled himself on Blake. Since Woolf copies images by Rosetti and Blake in the same year, she understands the rich aesthetic affiliations between the Pre-Raphaelites with Blake.

[16] Silver, '"Anon" and "The Reader", p.375.
[17] Ibid, p. 376.

Her drawings of 1904 are her first explicit engagement with Blake. It is clear from Woolf's letter to Violet Dickinson, dated 30 December 1904, that as well as being a hobby these drawings take on a symbolic significance:

> I shall give up literature and take to art, I am already a draughtsman of great promise. I draw for 2 hours every evening after dinner, and make copies of all kinds of pictures, which *Nessa says* show a very remarkable feeling for line. Pictures are easier to understand than subtle literature, so I think I shall become an artist to the public, and keep my writing to myself. I am probably the only living person who can understand it. Bold politicians cant. (L I 170).

In 1904, Woolf is anxious about whether to pursue writing or drawing with greater attention, devotion, and intensity. This parallels her 1940 comment that all artists of the 'twin gift' struggle to know what kind of art to make.

In addition, Blake is a powerful example for Woolf, as a young experimental writer, still unsure of how to 'become an artist to the public' while remaining true to the vision of the 'writing' she feels inclined to keep private. Blake is more inspiring than the politician R.B. Haldane, (1856-1928), Secretary of State for War between 1905 and 1912. Violet Dickinson arranged that Woolf's essay about the Brontës, 'Haworth, November, 1904' would be read by Haldane.[18] However, Woolf finds his feedback very disparaging and discouraging. Haldane is on her mind when she makes the comment above that her work is not for 'Bold politicians.' Working with his wife, Catherine Blake (née Boucher, 1762-1831), teaching her how to hand colour the illuminated books of poetry he printed from copper plates in his home, William Blake found a way to negotiate the fact that what eighteenth-century aesthetics expected was in fierce tension with Blake's incendiary poetry in the tradition of Swedenborgian protestant dissent. He is a successful engraver and illustrator on the one hand, receiving substantial public commissions, and a radical self-publisher on the other. In 1917 with Leonard, Woolf bought a letterpress machine, setting up the Hogarth Press, initially as a part time hobby in

[18] Haldane's comments to Woolf are cited by Quentin Bell in *Virginia Woolf a Biography: Volume One* (London: Hogarth Press, 1972), p.94

typesetting for relaxation. The press eventually gave Woolf full control of the means of artistic production.

The drawings which Woolf discusses with Dickinson, include two that respond to Blake's imagery. Illustrated below is Blake's original illustration for the new 1808 edition of Robert Blair's 1743 poem *The Grave,* followed by Woolf's sketch in response:

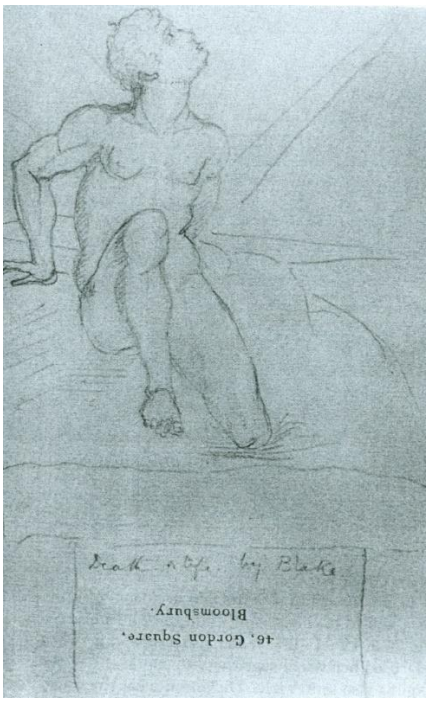


Figure 1. (left) William Blake. *Death's Door*, a study for Plate 11 of Blair's *Grave*, graphite with India Ink on paper, (c. 1805). Permission of the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

Figure 2: (right) Virginia Woolf, *Death and Life by Blake*, (1904), from the private collection of Quentin Bell.

In figure two, Woolf uses headed writing paper, showing her address upside down, 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. She makes a clearly defined area of text, like Blake's design, in which she gives her sketch a title 'Death and life by Blake.' Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell had recently moved, after the death of their father, Sir Leslie Stephen, in February, 1904, from Hyde Park Gate to Bloomsbury. As well as mourning their father, both felt a sense of liberation, especially from the demands of being caregivers for Leslie Stephen, who was very ill towards the end of his life.

Woolf's title 'Death and life by Blake', corresponds to Blake's representation of life and death in figure one above. Blake evokes death with an old man entering a tomb, and life with a young man looking up towards the heavens. Unjustly, the engraving commission for the new edition of Blair's poem was given to Luigi Schiavonetti, whose use of Blake's drawings is rightly acknowledged in the book's description of its illustrations: 'From the Original Inventions of William Blake.'[19] Blake also wrote a poem, printed as an accompaniment to Blair's work, as a dedication: 'To the Queen.' This poem was represented in Woolf's personal library, in her copy of *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake* (see my second appendix). The injustice of this commission being stolen from Blake is resolved when the 1808 illustrations to Blair's poem are treated as evidence of Blake's artistic visionary genius.[20]

The other Blake image Woolf finds inspiring, forms a contrast to the Blair illustration. Instead of a commissioned design, Woolf's other Blake sketch is based on an example of Blake's independently made illuminated relief etchings. As illustrated below, Woolf copies the image Blake uses to visually introduce his anti-authoritarian rewriting of the Book of Genesis, *The First Book of Urizen* (1794):

Figure 3: William Blake, *FIRST BOOK OF URIZEN*, (1794). Copy A, Yale Center for British Art, ©*Blakearchive.org*.

[19] See for example, the edition reproduced online from the Royal Academy collection: https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/work-of-art/title-page-34 [Accessed 03/11/2020] cf. Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley 'The Printing of Blake's designs for Blair's Grave', in *The Book Collector*, (Winter Issue 1975), 535-553

[20] See the responses compiled in: *William Blake: the critical heritage* G.E. Bentley (ed.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp.110-137.

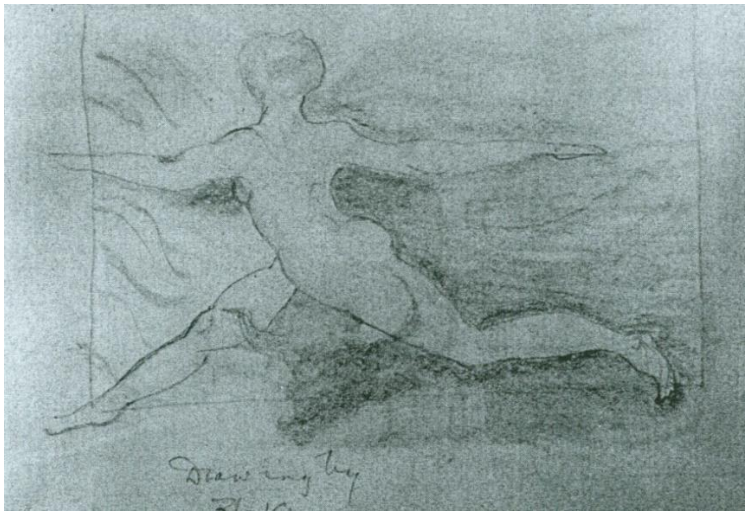
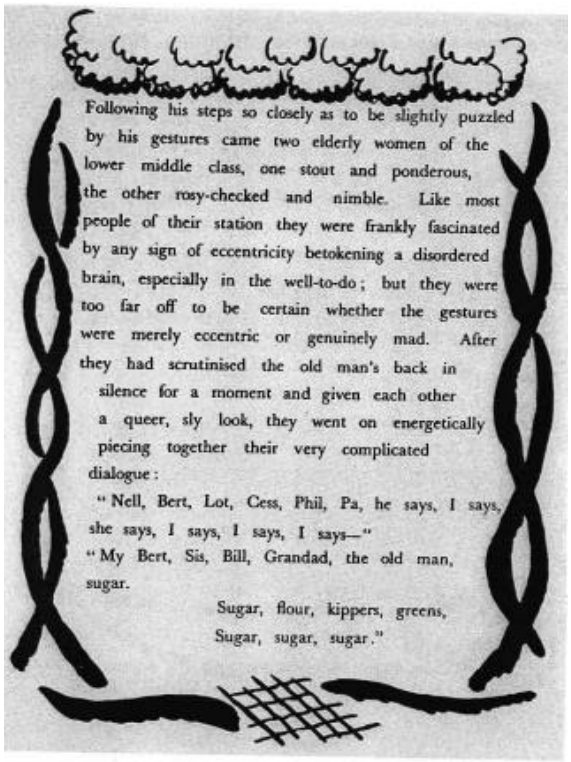


Figure 4: Virginia Woolf, *Drawing by Blake*, (1904), from the private collection of Quentin Bell.

Both of Woolf's Blake sketches are monochrome. Neither of these Blake images is represented in the Blake volumes Woolf owned, which were nineteenth- and early twentieth-century volumes of Blake's poetry given in conventional typography without the accompanying images.

In 1927, the year of Blake's centenary, Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell collaborated on a small-scale reprint of Woolf's short story *Kew Gardens* (1919), first published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press.[21] Vanessa Bell also made woodcut illustrations, hand printed by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, for the first edition of this short story in 1919. Bell also designed images for the Hogarth Press edition of Woolf's first short story collection, *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), which also includes 'Kew Gardens'.[22] Vanessa Bell also acts as Woolf's illustrator again for the 1927 edition of Kew Gardens, borrowing her motif, illustrated here, from Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience: shewing the two contrary states of the human soul* (1794):

[21] Virginia Woolf, *Kew Gardens* (London: Hogarth Press, 1919); *Kew Gardens* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927).
[22] Virginia Woolf, *Monday or Tuesday* (London: Hogarth Press, 1921).



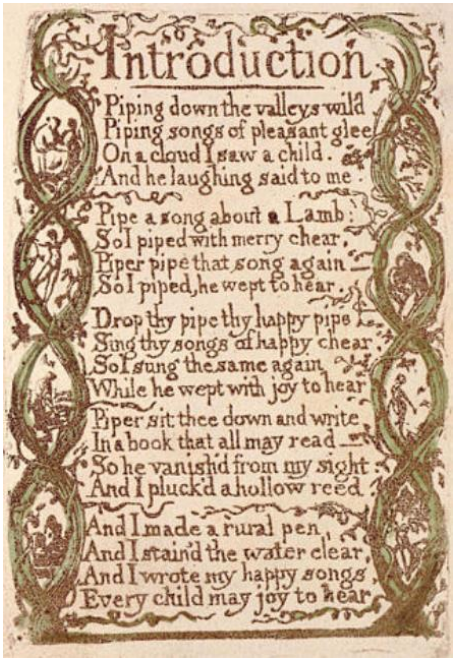
Following his steps so closely as to be slightly puzzled by his gestures came two elderly women of the lower middle class, one stout and ponderous, the other rosy-checked and nimble. Like most people of their station they were frankly fascinated by any sign of eccentricity betokening a disordered brain, especially in the well-to-do; but they were too far off to be certain whether the gestures were merely eccentric or genuinely mad. After they had scrutinised the old man's back in silence for a moment and given each other a queer, sly look, they went on energetically piecing together their very complicated dialogue:

"Nell, Bert, Lot, Cess, Phil, Pa, he says, I says, she says, I says, I says, I says—"

"My Bert, Sis, Bill, Grandad, the old man, sugar.

Sugar, flour, kippers, greens,
Sugar, sugar, sugar."

Figure 5: (left) Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell. Page 12 of *Kew Gardens* (1927).



Introduction

Piping down the valleys wild
Piping songs of pleasant glee
On a cloud I saw a child.
And he laughing said to me:

Pipe a song about a Lamb:
So I piped with merry chear.
Piper pipe that song again
So I piped, he wept to hear.

Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe
Sing thy songs of happy chear,
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear

Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read
So he vanish'd from my sight:
And I pluck'd a hollow reed.

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear

Figure 6 (right): 'Introduction' from *Songs of Innocence* (1789), Copy B. Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress. © *Blakearchive.org.*

Like Woolf's 1904 Blake sketches, Bell's illustrated designs are monochrome. The representations of Blake's imagery that Woolf had available in 1904 were probably reproductions in black and white. Moreover, these books would have been shared in a library by Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf in 1904. Any books that contained Blake's imagery probably eventually became part of Vanessa Bell's library, whereas the volumes of Blake's poetry were needed more urgently by Woolf. This further demonstrates the rich creative parallels between Vanessa Bell the painter, and Woolf the writer.[23]

The likelihood that as they began to live in separate houses, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf decided to divide the library books in order to share Blake on visual and verbal lines, indicates their mutual respect for their separate areas of expertise in writing and painting.

[23] See Diane Filby Gillespie, *The Sisters' Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988).

This respect is impressive because often, image and text are conceptualised in conflict and/or competition. In 1926, Bell and Woolf's friend, the art critic, painter, and aesthetic theorist, Roger Fry (1866-1934), writes 'Book illustration is a battle-ground, a no man's land raked by alternate fires from the artist and the writer, claimed by both, sometimes nearly conquered by one but only to be half recaptured by the other.'[24] By simplifying Blake's original design, Bell makes Woolf's text visually easy to read. As Frances Spalding notes, Bell's illustrations 'echo', rather than 'replace the sensations and images aroused by the text', meaning that 'text and image' harmonise with 'each other as in Blake's illuminated books.' [25]Bell's design frames and enhances rather than distracting from the text. Hana Leaper summarises it perfectly, stating that Fry's 'vision of furious struggle between author and illustrator is laid to rest in the rich embroidery of the 1927 edition of Kew Gardens.'[26]

'Flumina Amem Silvasque' (1917)

Between 1904 and 1940, Woolf makes several explicit references to Blake in her essays. Some are so passing as to not merit a separate subsection. For instance, in 1908, in her *TLS* essay, 'The Diary of a Lady-in-Waiting' (1908), Woolf mentions that the novelist Lady Charlotte Bury (1775-1861) met Blake, describing him as an 'eccentric little artist' who was 'full of imagination and genius' (E I 198). Similarly, in Woolf's series of short reflections on autobiographical texts, 'The Lives of the Obscure' (1925), Woolf very briefly mentions the excitement in an otherwise unexciting life of meeting 'Mr Blake', the visionary 'man with very bright eyes.' (E IV 121). She remains interested in the term 'eccentric' as particularly applicable to Blake's 'imagination' in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' (1917), her *TLS* review of

[24] Roger Fry, 'The Author and the Artist', *Burlington Magazine for Connosseurs*, Vol. 49 No. 280 (July 1926), 9-12 (9).
[25] Frances Spalding, *Vanessa Bell* (New Haven and New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1983), p. 221
[26] Hana Leaper, 'Ekphrastic Writing, Illusive Illustration: Vanessa Bell's Embroideries for Virginia Woolf's "Kew Gardens"', in *Virginia Woolf and the World of Books*, Nicola Wilson and Claire Battershill (eds.), (South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2018), p. 127.

A Literary Pilgrim in England, by the Edwardian critic and First World War poet, Edward Thomas (1878-1917). [27] Woolf's title quotes book II of Virgil's Georgics: 'flumina amem silvasque inglorius' – 'may I love the waters and the woods, though I be unknown to fame.'[28] I will discuss this further in Chapter Five, Section Five.

In *A Literary Pilgrim in England*, Thomas focuses on rural areas, meaning his book contains many references to pastoral poetry, namely the attempt of poets to escape the city. He maps England through its writers, assessing which poets, essayists, and novelists best captured the spirit of the area they lived, including some writers in Scotland. What impresses Woolf about Blake in Thomas's study, is the ability to expose the arbitrary links between a poet and the place they happen to live:

> Blake, for instance, comes under London and the Home Counties; and it is true that, as it is necessary to live somewhere, he lived both in London and at Felpham, near Bognor. But there is no reason to think that the tree that was filled with angels was peculiar to Peckham Rye, or that the bulls that "each morning drag the sulphur Sun out of the Deep" were to be seen in the fields of Sussex. "Natural Objects *always did and do* weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in me!" he wrote; and the statement which might have annoyed a specialist determined to pin a poet down, starts Mr Thomas off upon a most interesting discussion of the state of mind thus revealed. After all, considering that we must live either in the country or in the town, the person who does not notice one or the other is more eccentric than the person who does. It is a fine opening into the mind of Blake. (E 2 162).

Woolf is also impressed by the evidence of an 'elastic and human principle', a supple critical mind, in Edward Thomas, which allows him to include Blake when the 'specialist determined to pin a poet down' would have been impatient and discouraged. Thomas is patient in pursuing 'a most interesting discussion of the state of mind thus revealed' (E II 162). Thomas's and Woolf's decision to distance Blake from either country or city, only emphasises that Blake has much to teach us about their differences. Not only is Woolf excited

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[27] 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', printed anonymously in the *TLS*, (11 October 1917), a review of Edward Thomas' geographical survey of writers and regions, *A Literary Pilgrim in England* (London: Methuen & Co. 1917).

[28]Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI.* H.Rushton Fairclough (trans.), G.P. Goold (revisions) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1999), pp.170-71

by Blake's 'eccentric' lack of a fixed relation to the 'country' or 'the town.' She is interested in his 'eccentric' creation of poetic images which she believes brilliantly expressed in Blake's statement that she quotes: 'Natural Objects *always did and do* weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in me.'

In her notebook of 1917, Woolf returns to Blake's comment, originally made in the margins of Wordsworth's poetry. As a piece of marginalia, Blake's statement shows he believes Wordsworth could be too reliant on 'Natural Objects.'[29] From reading Edward Thomas, Woolf learns Blake's statement was a 'note to Wordsworth.'[30] However, an entry in her notebook, from 1917, made after writing 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', shows Woolf reading more widely about Blake's comment on Wordsworth. Under the heading 'Sayings & Quotations', she writes: 'Blake. Written in copy of W^{ths} Poems./See Crabb Robinson. Rem. 1827.'[31] In 1917, Crabb Robinson's 1869 *Reminiscences* was the only text containing transcriptions of Blake's annotations to Wordsworth.[32]

In 1827, Blake still has in his possession, two volumes of Wordsworth's poetry borrowed from his friend Henry Crabb Robinson. After Blake's death these were returned to Crabb Robinson, who then identifies Blake's handwriting and discusses Blake's statements in his diary. By reading Crabb Robinson on Blake, Woolf discovers that Blake's annotation to Wordsworth includes a reference to a Michelangelo sonnet. Therefore, when Woolf links Blake and Michelangelo in 1940, her thoughts return to 'Flumina Amem Silvasque.' In addition to addressing 'Natural Objects', Blake also writes in the margin: 'Wordsworth must

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[29] Wordsworth develops his theory of how the poet uses nature for poetic inspiration in his preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). See also studies that contrast Blake's and Wordsworth's specific historical contexts, such as Heather Glen, *Vision and Disenchantment: Blake's* Songs *and Wordsworth's* Lyrical Ballads (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
[30] Thomas, *A Literary Pilgrim in England*, p.19
[31] Brenda R. Silver, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 194.
[32] Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson volume II* (London: Macmillan, 1869), Thomas Sadler (ed.) p .381. For the transcription of Blake's marginalia on Wordsworth used by Blake scholars in the twenty-first century, see: (Erdman, CPPWB, 665-67)

know that what he Writes Valuable is not to be found in Nature Read Michael Angelo's Sonnet, Vol 2 p. 179' (CPPWB Marg. 665). Blake admires Wordsworth's poetry but disagrees with Wordsworth's identification of the poetic imagination solely in nature, at the expense of the divine. He views the Michelangelo sonnet as evidence for divine inspiration.

Crabb Robinson identifies the Michelangelo sonnet Blake refers to, quoting its first two lines: "No mortal object did these eyes behold,/ When first they met the lucid light of thine."[33] This is from Wordsworth's translation which is available to Woolf from her own complete edition of Wordsworth.[34] Also available to Woolf is an account of Wordsworth's 'translating Ariosto and Michael Angelo's sonnets' in her copy of George Mclean Harper's book on Wordsworth.[35]

Further evidence suggests Woolf's 1940 notes relate to her earlier essays. In 1938, in her diary entry on 14 October, Woolf imagines a project that would make use of her 'innumerable T.L.S. notes', allowing her, experimentally, to be 'ranging all through English lit: as I've read it & noted it during the past 20 years' (D V 180). In the same 1940 notebook that mentions Blake, Woolf also identifies the following topic of interest: 'The effect of country upon writers.' [36] Here Woolf intentionally paraphrases Edward Thomas' main subject in *A Literary Pilgrim in England*. When working on 'Reading at Random. Or Turning the Page', Woolf clearly consults her 'innumerable T.L.S. Notes.' Woolf's 1940 note indicates therefore that 'seeing & writing' is also one of the qualities she thinks make Blake's 'imagination' unique.

[33] Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence,* pp.381-82.
[34] Wordsworth, William, *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. Intro. by John Morley. (London; New York: Macmillan, 1902.)
[35] George McLean Harper, *William Wordsworth, His Life, Works and Influence,* 3rd edition, (London: J. Murray, 1929), p. 420.
[36] Silver, '"Anon" and "The Reader", (373)

Woolf sees Blake as a kindred artistic spirit because she shares his view that slavish imitation of 'Natural Objects' devastates 'imagination.' Elsewhere, in the text that accompanied his solo exhibition of 1809, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures: Poetical and Historical Inventions* (1809), Blake wishes to prevent all arts, poetry, music, and painting, from 'the sordid drudgery of facsimile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances.' (Erdman, DC, 541).[37] It is appropriate therefore that Woolf opposes all forms of reducing Blake's 'imagination', such as – using her example in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' – thinking Blake's 'tree that was filled with angels was peculiar to Peckham Rye.' (E II 162).

Woolf on Blake and Shelley in 1919 and 1934

Woolf develops her thoughts about Blake's distinctive 'imagination' when she names similarities between Blake and Shelley. In 'The Intellectual Imagination' (1919), Woolf classifies poets as either 'intellectual' or 'visionary' and concludes: 'Blake and Shelley are 'obvious instances of the visionary.' (E III 134)[38] Woolf takes these terms, 'intellectual' and 'visionary' from Walter De La Mare, who writes that 'poetic imagination' is 'of two distinct kinds or types':

> The one divines, the other discovers. The one is intuitive, inductive; the other logical, deductive. The one visionary, the other intellectual. […] Not that any one poet's imagination is purely and solely of either type. The greatest poets – Shakespeare, Dante, Goëthe, for instance, are masters of both. Other poets, Wordsworth, Keats, Patmore, for instance, may manifest in varying measure the one impulse and the other. But the two streams, though their source and tributaries intermingle, are distinguishable; and such poets as Plato, the writer of the book of Job, Vaughan, Blake, Coleridge, and Shelley, may be taken as representative of the one type; Lucretius, Donne, Dryden, Byron, Browning, Meredith, as representative of the other. Is not life both a dream and an awakening?[39]

De La Mare's two categories serve a rhetorical aim of identifying those 'greatest poets' who combine the 'intellectual' and the 'visionary.' He admits this distinction between 'visionary'

[37] This catalogue title henceforward abbreviated to *Descriptive Catalogue*.
[38] Woolf's review in *TLS*, 11 December, of Walter De La Mare's book *Rupert Brooke and the Intellectual Imagination* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1919)
[39] De La Mare, *Rupert Brooke and the intellectual imagination*, pp.12-13.

and ‘intellectual’ is not absolute, meaning that though Blake is a clearer representative of the ‘visionary’, his work has aspects of the ‘intellectual’ tendency.

Woolf further appropriates De La Mare’s ideas in *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* (1934), an essay she printed as a Hogarth Press pamphlet and in the *Yale Review*.[40] The distinction between the ‘intellectual’ and ‘visionary’ poets is not relevant, however, but Woolf reuses her 1919 identification of Blake and Shelley as ‘obvious instances of the visionary’ to clarify the aesthetics of Walter Sickert’s paintings. Uniting the visual and verbal arts, Woolf initially identifies Sickert among ‘a school of novelists’ that is ‘realist’ in character, including Dickens, Balzac, Gissing and Arnold Bennett among her examples. (E VI 41). Despite thinking of Sickert as predominantly realist, Woolf acknowledges rare instances where he seems closer to the poets than the novelists:

> Sickert makes us aware of beauty – over the shoulders of the innkeeper; for he is a true poet, of course, one in the long line of English poets, and not the least. Think of his Venice, of his landscapes; or of those pictures of music-halls, of circuses, of street markets, where the acute drama of human character is cut off; and we no longer make up stories but behold – is it too much to say a vision? But it would be absurd to class Sickert among the visionaries; he is not a rhapsodist; he does not gaze into the sunset; he does not lead us down glorious vistas to blue horizons and remote ecstasies. He is not a Shelley or a Blake. (E VI 42).

Woolf views Shelley and Blake as visionaries, not realists and she thinks that Sickert resembles poets ‘who have kept close to the earth, to the house, to the sound of the natural human voice.’ (E VI 43). As an example of a poet who ‘kept close to the earth’, she mentions Wordsworth. Explicitly in ‘Flumina Amem Silvasque’ and implicitly in *Walter Sickert: a Conversation*, Woolf explores differences in aesthetics and in opinion between Blake and Wordsworth.

[40] Printed as a pamphlet by the Hogarth Press on the 25th of October 1934, with a cover illustration by Vanessa Bell, 3800 copies. Woolf’s essay was also printed under her name as ‘A Conversation About Art’ in *Yale Review*, (September 1934).

Generally, art historians confirm Woolf's view that Sickert was not a Blakean artist. For example, Charles Harrison's book on modernist art in England identifies Paul Nash as an example of a modernist painter who has 'Romantic enthusiasm for the art of William Blake.'[41] By contrast, he describes Sickert as painstaking in 'faithful observation', meaning his paintings represent the narrow artistic imitation of nature that Woolf and Blake find removed from the liberal use of imagination.[42] Woolf has a great deal of respect for Sickert, but she never identifies her fiction in the same 'realist' mode.

Woolf takes pleasure in writing about Sickert's work. As Woolf's contemporary, Rebecca West notes, Woolf often writes with 'delight and intelligence' about 'what has been painted.'[43] Though Woolf often thinks writing about the pictorial arts will be illuminating of those arts, when expressing her admiration for her sister's painting, in her foreword to the *Catalogue of Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell* (1934), written in the same year as her essay on Sickert, Woolf acknowledges that the 'swift strokes of the painter's brush' can create a 'world where words talk such nonsense that it is best to silence them', thereby allowing Bell's images their 'glowing serenity and sober truth'. (E VI 29).

Central to Woolf's affinity with Sickert is a shared love of the relation between the visual and verbal arts. In *Walter Sickert,* Woolf supports her views on Sickert by quoting from a letter she received from Sickert himself: 'I have always been a literary painter, thank goodness, like all the decent painters.' (E VI 45). She also visits exhibitions of Sickert in London, where she reflects on writing about his work. [44] In 1933, she writes to Sickert to tell him she admires his

[41] Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1990-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 1981), p. 134
[42] Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1990-1939*, p. 26
[43] Rebecca West, 'review', *New Statesman,* (4 November, 1922): reprinted in in *Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage,* Robin J. Majumdar, and Allen Mclaurin (eds.), (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1997), p.101.
[44] Cf. There was a Sickert exhibition that Woolf likely attended in 1934. Stuart N. Clarke's notes to *Walter Sickert: a Conversation* remind us that there is an editorial note in the fourth volume of Woolf's diaries, stating that 'A retrospective of pictures by Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942) was shown from 2-23 November at Thomas Agnew & Son, 43 Old Bond Street', (D IV 190).

paintings, and in his undated reply he makes a request: 'Do me the favour to write about my pictures and say you like them.'[45] As Anna Gruetzner Robins writes, Sickert is 'one of those rare artists whose love of words matched his love of image-making.'[46] Woolf understands this point. She writes that Sickert 'is among the hybrids, the raiders', namely the artists who choose not to 'bore deeper and deeper into the stuff of their own art', preferring instead to be 'always making raids into the lands of others' (E VI 45). Sickert and Blake are implicitly linked in Woolf's essay because Woolf sees both 'among the hybrids.' By 1934, she already considers Blake a hybrid artist, who combines 'seeing & writing.' In fact, as I have shown, her interest in Blake and the visual and verbal arts begins at least as early as 1904.

Woolf versus Coventry Patmore on Blake in 1921

In 'Patmore's Criticism' (1921), Woolf rightly accuses Patmore of making an 'uncalled for fling at Blake' (E III 310).[47] As in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', 'The Intellectual Imagination' and *Walter Sickert: a Conversation*, it is the nature of Blake's imagination that is at stake. Like De La Mare, Patmore distances Blake from the 'intellectual' sphere in poetry. Included in the edition of Patmore that Woolf reviews is Patmore's 1888 essay on the novelist Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), in which he states that except for 'a few lucid hours', Blake was 'little better than an idiot.'[48]

For Woolf, Patmore is also the arch Victorian misogynist poet. In 'Professions for Women' (1931), a posthumously published speech Woolf gives to the London and National Society for Women's service, she describes a 'certain phantom' that interferes with the profession of being a writer: 'And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called

[45] See E6, p. 46: Clarke notes there is a copy of this original letter held by MHP in Sussex.
[46] Anna Gruetzner Robins (ed.), 'Introduction' *Walter Sickert: The Complete Writings on Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.xxxvi
[47] Printed in the *TLS*, (26 May 1921).
[48] Patmore's essay on Oliver Goldsmith was in *St James Gazette*, 16 January 1888. See also Coventry Patmore, *Courage in Politics and Other Essays 1885-1896* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), p.61.

her after the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House.' (E VI 480).[49] Woolf's 'phantom' alludes to Patmore's poem, 'The Angel in the House' (1854), which is represented—given to Woolf by her mother Julia Stephen— in its fourth edition in her library (see my third appendix).[50] Describing this 'phantom' presence that she calls the 'angel in the house', Woolf explains that she is 'utterly unselfish' and 'sacrificed herself daily' but adds that these qualities 'so tormented me that at last I killed her.' (E VI 480). Woolf thinks Patmore's poem represents a Victorian form of puritan misogyny to be urgently rejected by early twentieth century generations of women entering the professions in greater numbers.

Woolf on Walter Raleigh and Blake in 'A Professor of Life' (1926)

Similarly, in 'A Professor of Life' (1926), Woolf claims to be 'bewildered' and 'disappointed' by what the literary critic Walter Raleigh says in private about William Blake (E IV 343).[51] 'A Professor of life' responds to Raleigh's letters, and Woolf quotes the following from Raleigh's 1905 letter to the Blake scholar John Sampson: 'The weak point in William [Blake] is not his Reason, which is A.1, but his imagination.'[52] Raleigh shares his thoughts on Blake with Sampson while he is thinking about his introduction to the 1905 Clarendon publication, *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake*, a book which, as I state above, Woolf owned.

Raleigh is not writing as a Blake expert. He therefore writes to Sampson, the editor of this 1905 edition, to exchange ideas with a critic who was steeped in Blake. Woolf is 'disappointed' and 'bewildered' because Raleigh has nothing very insightful to say about Blake. In addition, Raleigh appears critical of Blake's 'imagination' which we know from

[49]'Professions for Women' first published in *The Death of the Moth and other essays by Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1942).
[50] Patmore's poem was first published as: *The Angel in the House: the betrothal* (London: John W. Parker and Son: 1854).
[51] Woolf wrote this for *Vogue* in response to: Walter Raleigh, *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh,* Lady Raleigh (ed.), D. Nichol Smith (pref). 2 vols (London: Methuen, 1926).
[52]Raleigh, *Letters*, p.284

'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf admires. In the same letter to Sampson, Raleigh reflects on Blake's identification of the figure of Jesus Christ with the imagination, meaning that all individuals have a Christlike, imaginative quality. He is impressed by a 'doctrine' predicated on 'Jesus Christ being imagination', but he claims Blake applied it far 'too loosely & self-indulgently.'[53] As Raleigh's comments indicate, Blake's interest in Jesus Christ as model for the imagination extends throughout his work. Simply put, Woolf understands that Raleigh is incapable of sensitively understanding Blake's imagination and poetic mind. Woolf also notes that his letters show him always 'seeming to apologise', when he mentions 'Bill Blake or Bill Shakespeare or old Bill Wordsworth', for 'bringing books into the talk at all.' (E IV 434). This lack of serious critical discussion in his private letters shows Raleigh's embarrassed and contemptuous disrespect for the common critical reader whom Woolf admires, the critical reader who does not always write for a public audience.

Woolf on Blake in *Roger Fry A Biography* (1940)

In *Roger Fry A Biography*, Woolf writes about Fry's life as a student of natural sciences at the University of Cambridge in the second half of the 1880s. She is most interested in Fry's interests outside of this scientific specialism: 'He refers to papers that he read himself or heard others read. There was one on William Blake; another on George Eliot.' (RF 46). In Chapter Two, Section Eight, I will cite Roger Fry's notes for a lecture he gave in 1886 on William Blake, which might well be the same paper Woolf references in her biography of Fry. Moreover, describing Fry's making a living as an art historian and critic, Woolf writes: 'He often calls in Shakespeare to help him out with a quotation, or Blake.' (RF 106). Woolf gives her reader the impression that Fry was an authority on Blake, but also that he found Blake's voice authoritative because it could finesse a point difficult to articulate.

[53] Ibid, p.284.

In summary: Woolf's explicit references to Blake by name

I have shown Woolf refers explicitly to Blake by name on thirteen different occasions, mostly in essays, but also in notes. To recapitulate, her explicit engagements with Blake are, in chronological order, (1) 1904, Woolf's two Blake sketches; (2) 1908, Woolf mentions Lady Charlotte Bury meeting Blake; (3) 1917, Woolf on Blake in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' (4), Woolf recording Blake's words on 'Natural Objects' in her notebook; (5) in 1919, Woolf on Blake and Shelley in 'The Intellectual Imagination'; (6) in 1921, Woolf refuting the 'uncalled for fling at Blake' in 'Patmore's criticism'; (7) in 1925, in 'The Lives of the Obscure', Blake being described as the 'man with very bright eyes'; (8) in 1926, Woolf on Raleigh's 'unprofessional' comments on Blake in 'A Professor of life'; (9), in 1934, Woolf making reference to Blake and Shelley again in *Walter Sickert: a Conversation*'; (10), in 1940, Woolf on 'Mental fight' in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid'; (11), Woolf's note on Blake's 'seeing & writing'; (12 and 13), and lastly Woolf's two mentions of Blake in *Roger Fry A Biography*.

Geoffrey Keynes and the Blake centenary (1927)

Listing these thirteen examples above of Woolf making explicit reference to Blake by name is necessary, but there are also cultural milestones in Blake's appreciation early in the twentieth century which we can assume Woolf follows, even if they are not mentioned explicitly in her diaries or essays. For example, in 1913, there was also a major William Blake retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery of British Art (Tate Gallery) in London, which included Blake's illustrations to *Comus*, which are relevant to Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, and 'On Being Ill' (1926). I return to this connection between Blake and Woolf in Chapter Six, Section Five.

Woolf's very close friend, the Blake scholar, Geoffrey Keynes (1887-1982), brother of Bloomsbury economist John Maynard Keynes, was on the organising committee for the centenary exhibition of Blake's visual art held at the Burlington Fine Arts Club. Martin Myrone's checklist of Blake exhibitions in the UK between 1904 and 2014 includes a note on the centenary exhibition suggesting the months it was on show: 'May-November?'[54] In the same year there was also a new Blake biography.[55] It opened in May 1927, which we know from the exhibitions listed that month in *The Burlington Magazine:* 'Burlington Fine Arts Club. Works of William Blake.' [56] In the journal's list of exhibitions in June, there is no repeat mention of the Blake exhibition which suggests it might have closed already by the end of May.[57]

As well as likely hearing about the centenary exhibition from Geoffrey Keynes, it was also advertised in *The Times,* which Woolf read every day. On May 5 1927, *The Times* reports that a mix of Blake's 'paintings, drawings, and engravings' are displayed at the Burlington Fine Arts Club on Saville-row, in an exhibition notable for 'the grandeur of some of the designs—"Elohim Creating Adam," "Elijah about to Ascend in the Chariot of Fire," and Nehuchadnezzar."[58] This same report also mentions that Blake's design for the "Canterbury Pilgrims" is displayed which is likely to be Blake's painting illustrating Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1392), a work I discuss in Chapter Seven, under the heading 'Woolf and

[54] Martin Myrone (2018) 'Blake in Exhibition and on Display, 1904–2014', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 19:3, (November 2018), 365-379.
[55] Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake*, (London: Nonesuch, 1927)
[56] *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs,* Vol. 50 No. 290 (May, 1927), (ii)

[57] *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs,* Vol. 50 No. 291 (June, 1927), (ii)

[58] Anonymous review, 'Art Exhibitions. William Blake', *The Times,* May 5, 1927.

Blake on Chaucer.'[59] The catalogue of the Blake centenary exhibition as a whole lists forty-nine illustrated plates, corresponding to forty-nine graphic works by Blake.[60]

Woolf's intellectual respect for Geoffrey Keynes is revealed in her diary from 1935, where she reports after a visit to Geoffrey Keynes home that saw his book collection: 'Geoffrey's library is the best investment he ever made.' (D IV 272). This library has been thoroughly catalogued.[61] In 1935, most of Keynes' collection of Blake books were high quality facsimiles. He did buy original examples of Blake's relief etchings, but mainly after Woolf's death in 1941. As well as being an intellectual ally of Virginia Woolf, Geoffrey Keynes saves Woolf's life after her attempted suicide in 1913, as narrated by Woolf's biographer Julia Briggs:

> Her life was saved by Geoffrey Keynes, who was luckily staying in his brother Maynard's rooms at Brunswick Square. Keynes was training as a house surgeon at St Bartholomew's Hospital. He and Leonard drove headlong across London to fetch a stomach pump from the hospital with which to wash the drug out of her system. During the night she nearly died, but by next morning, though still comatose, she was out of danger.[62]

Though circumstantial, Leonard's and Virginia Woolf's complicated emotional debt to Geoffrey Keynes, strongly suggests they would both feel it necessary, as well as desirable, to visit the Blake centenary.

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[59] Blake's painting of Chaucer's pilgrims is part of the Stirling Maxwell collection at Pollok House, Glasgow. See *The Stirling Maxwell Collection, Pollok House: Catalogue of Paintings and Sculptures* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museums & Art Galleries, 1977), entry No. 89, p. 48. Blake's contemporary, Robert H. Cromek made a very similar image which caused controversy, see: G.E. Bentley, 'Blake and Cromek: The Wheat and the Tares', *Modern Philology* Volume 71, Number 4, (May 1974) 366-379; Aileen Ward, 'Canterbury Revisited: The Blake-Cromek Controversy', *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* Volume 22, Issue 3, (Winter 1988), pp.80-92; JB Mertz, 'Blake V. Cromek: A Contemporary Ruling', *Modern Philology*, Volume 99, Number 1, (Aug 7), 2001, pp.66-7

[60] See *Catalogue: Blake Centenary Exhibition* (London: Privately Printed for the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1927).

[61] See *Bibliotheca Bibliographici: a catalogue of the library formed by Geoffrey Keynes* (London: Trianon, 1964).

[62] Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 42. See also Hermione Lee *Virginia Woolf*, (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 330

Moreover, Geoffrey Keynes had lifelong respect and affection for Leonard and Virginia Woolf. In his memoir, *The Gates of Memory* (1981), a title that borrows from Blake, Geoffrey Keynes writes fondly of Leonard Woolf giving him the handwritten draft of Woolf's essay 'On Being Ill' (1926), a document, Keynes says, of 'special attraction because Virginia commonly composed her work on a typewriter, whereas this one is written in her own hand, with many corrections, in her violet ink.'[63] 'On Being Ill' was first printed in the *New Criterion*, with T.S. Eliot as its editor. Subsequently, in 1930, Woolf revised it for a Hogarth Press pamphlet, printed by hand using the Woolf's own letter press machine, with a cover design by Vanessa Bell.

In his introduction to the catalogue of Blake's centenary exhibition, Laurence Binyon assesses whether Blake's talents were stronger in visual art or poetry, concluding that despite his 'power as a poet', Blake 'stands out in the history of English art without a forerunner', only to add a caveat:

> Not that his art can be divorced from his poetry; it is impossible indeed fully to appreciate *the Songs of Innocence* unless one knows the pages in which the verse seems spontaneously to flower into design and decoration. Nor can either be separated from his mysticism, or from his personality as a man. Blake was of a singular integrity; his whole nature flowed into whatever production he had in hand.[64]

When he writes that Blake has 'a singular integrity', Binyon idealises Blake. He also obfuscates the hard work undertaken by William and Catherine Blake in making the illuminated works. However, Binyon also writes sensitively about the products of the Blake's labours, identifying a spontaneous quality to the 'design and decoration.'

[63] Geoffrey Keynes, *The Gates of Memory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 116.
[64] Laurence Binyon 'Introductory Note', *Catalogue: Blake Centenary Exhibition,* p. 11

To the Lighthouse (1927) and Blake's 'bounding line'

Though I take my evidence for Blake's centenary being celebrated primarily from a British context, Blake also had many modernist followers in France, especially amongst the Surrealists. It is significant that Woolf published one part of Woolf's major novel, *To the Lighthouse* (1927), the mid-section, 'Time Passes', in a French translation by the critic Charles Mauron before including it in the novel as a whole.[65] In 1927, Phillippe Soupault, a key instigator along with André Breton, of the surrealist collective in Paris in the early twentieth century, collaborated with his wife, Marie-Louise Soupault, to produce a translation of Blake's *Songs*, into French, for the centenary year.[66] As Anna Balakian observes, Blake appealed to surrealists not as a poet of 'Christian symbols', but rather they admired 'Blake as a visionary in Rimbaud's sense', a poet gifted in 'rejecting exterior reality as a subject of artistic expression and for transforming the physical world in his effort to alter its dimensions.'[67] It is important to understand that Woolf's treatment of 'seeing & writing' in *To the Lighthouse*, through description of the paintings of a central character, Lily Briscoe, is an internationalist text, and therefore, if it is in dialogue with Blake's centenary, then only in an international celebration of Blake.

Woolf conceived of this project in terms opposed to the rigid interpretation exemplified by Binyon above to discuss Blake. This is shown when she writes to Roger Fry about the novel, on 27 May 1927, to explain:

> I meant *nothing* by The Lighthouse. One has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together. I saw all sorts of feelings would accrue to this, but I refused to think them out, and trusted that people would make it the deposit for their own emotions – which they have done, one thinking it means one thing another another. I can't manage Symbolism except in this vague, generalised

[65] See Virginia Woolf, *Le Temps Passe*, Charles Mauron (trans.), James M. Haule (postface), (Loire: Bruit de Temps, 2010). First published as 'Le Temps Passe', *Commerce*, Cahiers 10 (1926).
[66] William Blake, *Chants d'innocence et d'experience*, Philippe and Marie Louise Soupault (trans), (Paris: Cahiers libres, 1927).
[67] Anna Balakian, *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p.39

> way. Whether it's right or wrong I don't know, but directly I'm told what a thing means, it becomes hateful to me. (L III 385)

Woolf feels that the arbitrary relation of signifier to signified, an idea made famous by Ferdinand De Saussure's *Course on general linguistics* (1916), is appropriate for interpreting her work. Her last statement, 'directly I'm told what a thing means, it becomes hateful to me' has the strength of a rule to follow in general. While Woolf will have been interested in seeing Blake's paintings and illustrations at the centenary exhibition in 1927, she would not appreciate Binyon's attempt to define what Blake means.

In Blake's vocabulary, the closest thing we have to a 'central line', is his 'bounding line', which he discusses in his *Descriptive Catalogue*. It is reasonable to think the 'bounding line' is pertinent to modernist aesthetics. To take one example, from 1941, after the period of Woolf's interest in Blake from 1904 to 1940 which is the subject of this thesis, the modernist Welsh poet David Jones describes a 'vigorous linear thing' that 'bursts out in William Blake and others of less genius.'[68] Jones understands that Blake thinks the 'bounding line' is what makes great artists unique. Woolf reinvents Blake's 'bounding line' in the closing sentences of *To the Lighthouse*, when the painter Lily Briscoe has a sudden moment of decisive aesthetic control:

> Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was – her picture. Yes, with all its green and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought, it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? She asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at her steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (TL 318-19).

Emily Dalgarno detects an 'undercurrent of elegy' in this scene that captures 'the compelling power of perspective.'[69] Blakean aesthetics become more fragmented in modernist novels and

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[68] David Jones, 'Eric Gill as Sculptor' (1941), in *Epoch and Artist: Selected Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 294.
[69] Emily Dalgarno, *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.5.

poetry. As Sanja Bahun writes, the 'modernist fragment' is 'governed by ambivalence' about stable ideas of 'subject and the object.' [70]

Woolf's statement in her letter to Roger Fry that 'all sorts of feelings would accrue' to the 'central line' of *To the Lighthouse*, is in dialogue with comments in her essay 'Poetry, Fiction and Future' (1927):

> Feelings which used to come simple and separate do so no longer. Beauty is part ugliness; amusement part disgust; pleasure part pain. Emotions which used to enter the mind whole are now broken up on the threshold. [...] But the emotion which Keats felt when he heard the song of a nightingale is one and entire, though it passes from joy in beauty to sorrow at the unhappiness of human fate. In his poem sorrow is the shadow which accompanies beauty. In the modern mind, beauty is accompanied not by its shadow but by its opposite. The modern poet talks of the nightingale who sings 'jug jug to dirty ears.' (E IV 433)

Woolf quotes the second section, 'A Game of Chess' of Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*: 'the nightingale/ Filled all the desert with inviolable voice/ And still she cried, and still the world pursues/ "jug jug" to dirty ears.' [71] Eliot alludes to Keats's poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' (1819) about the myth of Philomel's rape by her sister's husband Tereus, and Philomel's subsequent transformation into a nightingale. However, Eliot treats it with bathos. As an expression of the 'modern mind', Woolf finds Eliot's poetry lacks simple Keatsian 'beauty', but also acknowledges that Keats felt 'emotion' as 'one and entire', whereas his poetry is more complex in its emotional effects: 'it passes from joy in beauty to sorrow at the unhappiness of human fate.' Eliot also believes emotions lost their stability. He describes a 'dissociation of sensibility' in most of the English poetry written after Milton and Dryden.[72] Eliot's statement is formulated in response to an anthology edited by Hubert J.C. Grierson.[73] Grierson is known to Leonard and Virginia Woolf because the Hogarth Press published his

[70] Sanja Bahun, *Modernism and Melancholia: Writing as Countermourning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 46
[71]T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*: (London: Hogarth Press, 1922), p.103.
[72] T.S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', *Selected Essays*, (London: Faber, 1932), p.288.
[73] Eliot's piece was a review, *TLS*, October 1921 of Herbert J.C. Grierson (ed.) *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921).

lectures on *Lyrical Poetry from Blake to Hardy* (1928) (see my third appendix). In addition, due to how important emotion is to Woolf and Eliot, it is welcome that affect theory is increasingly becoming important in modernist criticism.[74] In Chapter Three, Section seven, I discuss Eliot's antipathy to Blake.

1.2. Scholarship that unites Woolf and Blake

Since Woolf's explicit engagements with Blake span four decades from 1904 to 1940, Woolf scholars have reason to consider Woolf and Blake together. From 1988 onwards, thanks to the scholarship of Diane Filby Gillespie, Blake is widely recognized as important to Woolf studies. First, I chronologically discuss the critics who link Woolf and Blake from 1924 until 1988; then I shall assess the impact of Gillespie's contributions.

Before Gillespie 1924-1982

Four of Woolf's contemporaries compare her work to Blake: Bloomsbury art critic, Clive Bell; the British-Jamaican novelist, Richard Hughes; the novelist and critic, Winifred Holtby; and the American literary critic Hudson Strode. In his December 1924 review of Woolf's second novel, *Night and Day* (1919), Clive Bell compares Woolf and Blake in order to praise Woolf. He finds Blake's work weak because the 'aesthetic effect' depends entirely 'on the nature of his theme', whereas Woolf avoids a 'violent and surprising subject': 'she can move us to the limit of our sensibility by her art.'[75] Bell's term for the formal aesthetic communication of 'sensibility' is 'significant form', which he explores in *Art* (1914), calling it 'the one quality common to all works of visual art.'[76] Bell thinks that form predominates

[74] Cécile Varry is currently completing on a thesis on emotions in the poetry of T.S. Eliot at the Université de Paris, entitled 'Troublesome Attachments: Ambivalent Emotions in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot.' See also Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), Laura Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and its Discontents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), Julie Taylor, (ed.) *Modernism and Affect*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
[75] Clive Bell 'On Virginia Woolf's painterly vision', *Dial* (December 1924), 451-65; reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage*, p. 140
[76] Clive Bell, *Art*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1914), p. 8.

over the 'subject' in Woolf's novel and he is inclined to think of Woolf in relation to the visual arts. Woolf writes to Clive Bell about his book *Art* on 20 March 1914. She prefers Bell's 'theory' over his 'historical chapters' but finds he uses 'generalisation' excessively. (L II 46). Woolf doubts 'significant form' is present in 'all works of visual art' but finds it an interesting theoretical notion.

In his review of Woolf's fourth novel, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Richard Hughes describes one of the central characters, Septimus Warren Smith, as a Blakean 'lunatic.'[77] Hughes is thinking partly of a famous anecdote that exaggerates the idea of Blake as a visionary. It is thought that as a child, Blake could observe angels in a tree in Peckham. Woolf engages with this same anecdote in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', questioning the reduction of Blake's imaginative perception to a specific area in London. Hughes is right to identify Septimus Warren Smith's perception as distinct from most of the other characters in the novel. However, Smiths' Blakean perception cannot be equated to that of the 'lunatic.' I assess what is positive and negative about Septimus's Blakean perception in Chapter Five, on the country and city in Woolf and Blake .

In her book *Virginia Woolf: a Critical Memoir* (1932), Winifred Holtby mentions Blake twice.[78] Woolf was aware of Holtby's book, but seems disinterested, writing to Ethel Smyth on 21 August 1932, that Holtby's book will contain 'follies.' (L V 97). Firstly, Holtby identifies parallels between Blake's and Woolf's view of how class privilege affects poetic opportunities. The texts which Holtby foregrounds are on the one hand, Blake's 'A Vision of the Last Judgement' (1810), and on the other Woolf's feminist essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Blake's 'A Vision of the Last Judgement' (1810) describe his own painting practice

[77]Richard Hughes, 'A Day in London Life', *Saturday Review of Literature*, New York, (16 May 1925), 755; reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: the critical heritage*, p. 159.
[78] Winifred Holtby, *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Memoir* (London: Wishart & Co, 1932), p.38 and pp.118-119.

and is a later addition to his *Descriptive Catalogue*. Holtby concludes that Blake's ideas anticipate Woolf's. In 'A Vision of the Last Judgement', Blake argues that even though art transcends class distinctions, 'the Argument is better for Affluence than Poverty.' (CPPWB VLJ 561). Compare this to Woolf writing *in A Room of One's Own*: 'Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom.' (AROO 125). Holtby rightly concludes that both Woolf and Blake believe in 'the breaking down of barriers.'[79]

Holtby makes a similar argument about the 'breaking down of barriers' when discussing Blake's and Woolf's ideas about gender. Again, focusing on *A Room of One's Own*, she claims to find an antecedent to Woolf's androgynous 'doctrine of the sexes' in Romantic poetry: 'Coleridge believed in the androgynous mind of poets; William Blake upheld faith in Being which transcended sex.'[80] Coleridge is more explicitly mentioned in Woolf's discussions of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own*. It is interesting to think about Blake as a more implicit antecedent, not least from Holtby's implicit, curious idea that Coleridge was the philosopher of 'the androgynous mind of poets', whereas Blake's poetry wants to believe 'being' itself could have 'transcended sex.'

Holtby's evidence for this interpretation of Blake comes from his illuminated book *Jerusalem the emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804), in which Blake's artist figure, Los says: 'When the Individual appropriates Universality/ He divides himself into Male & Female: & when the Male & Female,/ Appropriate Individuality, they become an Eternal Death/ Hermaphroditic worshippers of a God of cruelty & law!'(CPPWB J 250). Holtby thinks both Woolf and Blake recognise 'eternal death', namely the division of male and female into slavish forms of a sovereign subjectivity. She claims that both understand that 'unity', the insight of 'all great

[79] Holtby, *Virginia Woolf,* p.38.
[80] Ibid, p. 118.

mystics and poets', allows Woolf and Blake to oppose 'barriers' that divide 'sex from sex, race from race and class from class.'[81] Many Woolf scholars today are uncomfortable with the term 'mystic' when applied to Woolf, but Holtby's is a proto deconstructionist reading of Woolf. [82] Decades later in the 1980s Holtby's arguments about androgyny are developed from a deconstructionist theoretical point of view, by Makiko Minow-Pinckney who argues that Woolf's 'Androgyny is the rejection of sameness' that opposes the 'cultural impulse to reduce the two sexes into something which is seemingly neither, but in actuality male.'[83]

Hudson Strode's review of Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), celebrates Woolf in the poetic canon, linking her to 'the great poets – Shakespeare, Donne, Shelley, Blake', because Woolf too can 'say the unsayable.' [84] Strode looks back across Woolf's work and is convinced that like her own two great examples of the visionary poet, Blake and Shelley, Woolf belongs firmly in that category. He thinks Woolf reflects aspects of reality that cannot otherwise be reflected in conventional phrase. This becomes a common rationale for linking Woolf and Blake. In 1964, Leon Edel cites Woolf's interest in 'the moment' and Blake's 'grain of sand' as examples of images in which 'a world' is felt 'within its fractional pulse – the very incandescence of consciousness.'[85] Mclaurin shares Edel's view that Woolf and Blake illuminate opaque realities, writing in 1973 that Woolf and Blake both think artists are trapped within a 'self-conscious' understanding of 'an infinite number of reflections' of reality.[86] Edel's comparison between Woolf's 'moment' and Blake's 'grain of sand' shows us

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[81] Ibid, p. 119.
[82] Two texts that take opposing positions on Woolf's theories of androgyny are: Elaine Showalter *A Literature of their Own revisited: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing,* (London: Virago, 2009), and Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, (London: Methuen, 1985).

[83] Makiko Minow-Pinckney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987), p.8
[84] Hudson Strode, 'from a review', *New York Times*, (5 October 1941); reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage*, p. 446.
[85] Leon Edel, *The Modern Psychological Novel* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), p. 94
[86] Allen McLaurin *Virginia Woolf: the Echoes Enslaved* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p.58.

that it is through minute details, rather than grand abstract representations of reality, that Woolf and Blake avoid the problem of representation identified by McLaurin.

In 1979, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, implicitly link both as examples of the strong creative response to Milton, concluding that Blake succeeded in 'blazing a path' for feminist responses to Milton.[87] Despite all of these various critical indications that Blake belongs in Woolf's literary and artistic past, Beverley Ann Schlack's 1982 landmark study of Woolf and the literary past fails to mention Blake.[88] Inspired partly by Schlack, Elizabeth Steele subsequently lists Woolf's critical references to Blake.[89] To Steele's compiled list, I add critical discussion in my first section of this introductory chapter. Schlack also inspires E.D. Warner's 1980 thesis on Woolf and Romantic poetry.[90] Warner does not focus explicitly on Blake. Instead, he traces 'natural supernaturalism' in Romantic poetry through to Woolf's writing. He takes this term from M.H. Abrams, who uses it to describe an Enlightenment break with religious belief, a transition made apparent when belief in nature stands in for the declining belief in God.[91] A religious view of nature in the eighteenth century is a problem for Blake. As Hazard Adams argues, Blake dislikes John Locke's philosophy because it makes nature and natural objects the distorted 'deluding product' of new 'faith' in secularist atheism.[92]

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[87] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 201.
[88] See Beverly Ann Schlack, *Continuing Presences: Virginia Woolf's use of Literary Allusion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979).

[89] Elizabeth Steele, *Virginia Woolf's Literary Sources and Allusions: A Guide to the Essays* (New York and London: Garland, 1983).

[90] E.D. Warner, Some Aspects of Romanticism in Virginia Woolf (PhD. Oxford, 1980).
[91] See M.H. Abrams *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971).
[92] Hazard Adams, *Blake's Margins: An Interpretive Study of the annotations* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Company, 2009), pp.169-70. On Locke and Blake see Wayne Glauser, *Locke and Blake: a conversation across the eighteenth century* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998).

Furthermore, since my thesis on Woolf and Blake focuses on a single author from Woolf's literary past, there is only one obvious methodological precedent: Perry Meisel's 1980 book on Woolf and Walter Pater.[93] Meisel is not deterred by the scarcity of evidence that Woolf studies Pater, which makes his methodology very important to my own. Most studies of Woolf and the literary past are organised by literary period.[94] Meisel is a rare exception in examining a single author. On the whole, studies of Woolf and the literary past are organised through Woolf's feminist politics. [95]

Blake scholars, however, sometimes take the opportunity to include discussion of Woolf. For example, in 1982, Anne Mellor refers to Woolf's polemical pacifist text against patriarchal oppressors, *Three Guineas* (1938). [96] However, Robert J. Bertholf and Annette S. Levitt, as editors of an essay collection entitled *William Blake and the Moderns* (1982), fail even to mention Woolf in their introduction, let alone commissioning a chapter on Woolf and Blake , but they are also encouraging when they assert Blake the 'most modern' of all Romantic poets, boldest in his: 'pursuit of political, philosophical, or artistic revolutions.'[97] They describe a radical Blake that provides a good working basis for further uniting Woolf and Blake.

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[93] Perry Meisel *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). See also see Michael John Russel Baxter, *Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater: a Reappraisal* (MPhil, University of Birmingham, 2011). On Pater and Modernism see for example: F.C McGrath, *The Sensible Spirit: Walter Pater and the modernist paradigm*, (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1986).

[94]See Alice Fox, *Virginia Woolf and the Literature of the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[95] Patricia Laurence, *The Reading of Silence: Virginia Woolf in the English Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Jane De Gay, *Virginia Woolf's Novels and the Literary Past* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); Juliet Dusinberre, *Virginia Woolf's Renaissance: Woman reader or common reader?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Elena Gualtieri *Virginia Woolf's Essays: Sketching the Past* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2000); Anne Reus, *Virginia Woolf's rewriting of Victorian Women Writers' Lives* (PhD, University of Leeds, 2018).

[96] Anne K. Mellor, 'Blake's Portrayal of Women', *Blake Quarterly* Vol. 16 No. 3 (Winter 1982/3), 148-155.

[97] Robert J. Bertholf and Annette S. Levitt, (eds.), 'Introduction' to *William Blake and the Moderns* (Albany: State University of New York, 1982), p. xi.

After Gillespie: 1990 onwards

In 1990, Diane Filby Gillespie argues it is the radical Blake that excites Bloomsbury, especially his defence of the 'unpopular side', but also notes that the group was never 'uncritical' of Blake.[98] Bloomsbury's attitude towards Blake is always provisional, partly because Blake's reputation and canonical position were constantly evolving and shifting in the early twentieth century. Gillespie therefore rightly understands that Blake had not yet become the iconic figure he is in the twenty-first century. By contrast, in 1995, when the Blake scholar and poet Kathleen Raine makes explicit comparisons between Woolf and Blake, she assumes a general recognition in her readers of Blake's importance.[99] Raine thinks back to her time as a young scholar, hearing Woolf lecture at Girton College in November 1928:

> It was during the summer that Virginia Woolf visited Girton – the first famous person with whom I had ever been in the same room. She came – it is all history now – at the invitation of the Girton Literary Society, to give her paper, *A Room of One's Own*. The meeting took place in Girton's reception-room, with its mural panels, the work of a benefactor of the College who, having lived before the benefits of higher education, had devoted those long, idle Victorian hours (what happened to all that abundance of time after the turn of the century?) to embroidering in wool on ivory satin rather than heavy foliage and flowers and birds and squirrels for the pleasure of those ladies who were to be educated away from the immemorial and symbolic occupations of Helen, Penelope, Persephone, and Blake's Daughters of Albion.[100]

Whereas Raine implies 'Blake's Daughters of Albion' are antithetical to the new professional opportunities of generations of women students at Girton who will be 'educated away' from such 'immemorial and symbolic occupations', Blake's illuminated book *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) may also be a proto-feminist antecedent to *A Room of One's*

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[98] Diane Filby Gillespie, 'Blake and Bloomsbury: Mental Warfare', *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* Vol. 33 No. 1, (Jan 1: 1990), 5-28 (5)

[99] As well as hearing Woolf lecture, Raine briefly considered working as an assistant at the Hogarth Press, see J.H. Willis jr, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers: The Hogarth Press: 1917-1941* (Charlotesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p.258.

[100] Kathleen Raine, 'Virginia Woolf at Girton', in *Virginia Woolf: Interviews and Recollections* J.H. Stape (ed.) (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), p.15

Own, since Blake's poem is an enlightened and enlightening text.[101] As Amanda Klinger notes, it explores 'how integral violence is to depictions of sex and gender, revolution, imperialism and the slave trade.' [102] Though not mentioned by Raine, Lady Julia Carew designed and stitched the tapestries that hung in Girton College from 1922. Raine is obviously not interested in the conditions of Blake's eighteenth century, which she thinks are obscured by Blake's 'immemorial and symbolic' poetry. She is more interested in the historical change that falls between the busy professional life of her generation and a nostalgic and idealised view of lost 'long, idle Victorian hours.'

In 1998, Ellen Tremper's study of Woolf and Romanticism does not take the opportunity to build on Gillespie's working, concluding from the outset of her book, that Woolf is 'especially enthusiastic', throughout her writing life, about all Romantic poets – 'Blake excepted' – adding that: 'it was Wordsworth with whom she began her creative life and Wordsworth on whom she depended down through its home stretch.'[103] Also in 1998, Sharon Jones Schellinger uses a Coleridgean definition of the 'imagination' to argue that Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* 'manifests the power to connect us with our future, as it serves as a beacon to unrealized possibilities', whereas Blake's posthumously published poem 'Auguries of Innocence', 'manifests the power to apprehend the primordial being that contains us and is Us.'[104] I share Schellinger's interest in comparing Woolf's and Blake's texts, but I use a simpler definition of 'imagination' as the ability to make images, irrespective of what literary

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[101] The lecture Woolf gives at Girton is closely related to *A Room of One's Own,* see S.P. Rosenbaum, (ed.) *Virginia Woolf, Women and Fiction*: *The Manuscript Versions of A Room of One's Own*, (Oxford: Shakespeare Head, 1992).

[102] Amanda Klinger 'The Vision of Enlightenment in William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*', *Nineteenth Century Studies,* Vol. 28 (2014), 1-22. For a rhetorical, rather than historical reading of the poem, see Nancy More Goslee, 'Questioning the master trope in Blake's Visions of the Daughters of Albion', *ELH,* Vol. 57 No.1 (Spring, 1990), 101-128.

[103] Ellen Tremper, "Who Lived At Alfoxton": *Virginia Woolf and English Romanticism,* (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), p.16.

[104] Sharon Jones Schellinger, 'Abstract' to *Three Faces of the Imagination,* (PhD thesis, University of Dallas, 1998). 'Auguries of Innocence' is represented in the Blake volumes Woolf owned (see my first appendix). It is undated since Blake drafted the poem in a notebook known as *The Pickering Manuscript*, now in the collection of the Morgan Library and Museum in New York.

images ‘manifest’ or ‘apprehend.’ Moreover, unlike Warner employing a single concept to define Woolf’s Romanticism, Tremper focuses on the single Romantic author of most interest to Woolf. While it is unproductive to discuss which writer Woolf preferred, Blake or Wordsworth, the point makes sense. Tremper shows us that her passion for Wordsworth (as discussed above in the section on ‘Flumina Amem Silvasque’) inclines Woolf to record Blake’s statement about ‘Natural Objects’ in Wordsworth’s poetry. Woolf wants to continue assessing Wordsworth with reference to Blake’s words.

Fortunately, Tremper did not deter subsequent scholars. Julia Briggs’s 2005 biography identifies a quotation from Blake in a crucial image of Woolf’s in *Three Guineas*: ‘the poison tree of intellectual harlotry’ (TG 179). Compare these lines from Blake’s ‘A Poison Tree’, in the ‘Experience’ sequence in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794): ‘I was angry with my friend;/ I told my wrath, my wrath did end./ I was angry with my foe:/ I told it not, my wrath did grow’ (CPPWB SIE 28). As Briggs writes, Woolf’s ‘poison tree’ belongs to a series of ‘metonymic images’ used throughout *Three Guineas* to represent exclusionary ‘traditional patriarchal professions.’[105] While Woolf’s quotation here from Blake of the ‘poison tree’ is explicit, Blake is not mentioned by name, so I do not include him in the grouping of thirteen explicit instances of Blake in Woolf’s essays listed in the previous section.

To take another example of a critic not deterred by Tremper, Jane Goldman argues ‘Flumina Amem Silvasque’ and especially Blake’s words on ‘Natural Objects’, comprise a ‘fine opening’ into Woolf’s intellectual and artistic development. [106] Usually though critics are reluctant to use ‘Flumina Amem Silvasque’ for understanding Woolf on Blake. For instance,

[105] Briggs, *Virginia Woolf*, p.322
[106] Jane Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 40.

Bonnie Kime Scott's 2012 book on Woolf and nature, touches on it, but only to make the general claim that modernists were sceptical of a Romantic 'faith in the sublime.'[107] But the Blakean sublime needs no scepticism. For Blake, the sublime is a religious, divine concept, fundamentally about humility. In his relief etching *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (C.1790), he writes: 'The most sublime act is to set another before you' (CPPWB MHH 36).

Similarly, Daniel T. O' Hara's 2015 study of Woolf and Romantic poets, posits that the 'Human Form Divine', Blake's term for 'messiah the Imagination' is given an 'ironic' treatment by modernist poetry and fiction.[108] His argument about Woolf subverts Harold Bloom's patriarchal and agonistic model of influence, arguing great poets from the canon become equals when Woolf alludes to them, offering their tacit approval of Woolf's genius.[109] In contrast to O' Hara, Amy Bromley avoids Bloom's excessive influence on the theory of influence, by focusing on aesthetic form, identifying 'generic hybridity' in two examples of the sketch, Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (1783) and Woolf's short story collection, *Monday or Tuesday*.[110] Blake's first book of poetry, *Poetical Sketches* is also formally unusual since it is printed conventionally, rather than from copper plates.

This chapter has outlined the primary evidence for my thesis and discussed critics whose research brings Woolf and Blake together. Chapter Two examines the Victorian response to Blake, and Woolf's engagement with key nineteenth-century Blakeans. Chapter Three examines the modernist, early twentieth-century engagement with Blake. Chapter Two and

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[107] Bonnie Kime Scott, *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature*, (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2012), p.14.

[108]Daniel T. O'Hara, *Virginia Woolf and the Modern Sublime, the invisible tribunal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), pp.90-91. On Woolf and the sublime see: Klitgard, Idå, *On the Horizon: A Poetics of the Sublime in Virginia Woolf's The Waves*, (Bethesda: Academica Press, 2004). Klitgard uses the definition of sublime in James B. Twitchell *Romantic Horizons: Aspects of the Sublime in English Poetry and Painting*, 1770-1850, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983).

[109] O' Hara rethinks the argument about poetry that Harold Bloom first makes in *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[110] Amy Bromley, *Virginia Woolf and the work of the literary sketch: scenes and characters, politics and printing in Monday or Tuesday* (1921) (PhD Thesis: Glasgow University, 2018), p. 45.

Chapter Three together therefore investigate the nineteenth-century genealogy of the twentieth-century response central to Woolf's position on Blake. The remaining chapters break with the previous two by each adopting a more specific approach. Chapter Four assesses how Woolf and Blake use 'Mental fight' to oppose fascist politics. Chapter Five examines their mutual interest in the country and the city. Chapter Six discusses Woolf's reading of Milton in relation to her interest in Blake, using Blake's intense reading of Milton (1608-1674). Chapter Seven examines further miscellaneous continuities between Woolf and Blake. Chapter Eight proposes in conclusion that scholars can only form an impression of Woolf's Blake.

2: Blake in the nineteenth century

2.1. Blake's moment of recognition in 1863

In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf makes passing reference to a story about Blake seeing angels in Peckham Rye. This story is first described in Alexander Gilchrist's influential Blake biography published in 1863:

> On Peckham Rye (by Dulwich Hill) it is, as he will in after years relate, that while quite a child, of eight or ten perhaps, he has his 'first vision.' Sauntering along, the boy looks up and sees a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars. […] If these traits of childish years be remembered, they will help to elucidate the visits from the spiritual world of later years, in which the grown man believed as unaffectedly as ever had the boy of ten.[111]

After his death in 1827, Blake's work remained quite obscure, largely ignored except for the devoted respect of the artists known as the Shoreham Ancients, including Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), Edward Calvert 1799-1883), and George Richmond (1809-1896). As G.E. Bentley observes, it was Gilchrist who establishes Blake's importance: 'Never has an important literary reputation been posthumously established so instantaneously and effectively.'[112] Gilchrist's biography is still a useful introduction to Blake because it was so influential. G.E. Bentley speculates that Gilchrist's story of Blake seeing angels was probably an anecdote Gilchrist heard **'**through Catherine Blake and Tatham.'[113]

Alexander Gilchrist also tells a dubious, but highly resonant, story in which Blake advises Thomas Paine to seek political exile in France to avoid execution.[114] As Claire Grogan notes, Paine matters to the twentieth century because he is 'central to the Labour party', whereas

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[111]Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake Vol.1*, reprint of the 1863 edition, (London: Macmillan, 1880), p.128.
[112] G.E. Bentley, 'Blake's reputation and its interpreters' (1958), printed in Bentley (ed.) *Blake Books: Annotated catalogues of William Blake's writing in illuminated printing, in conventional typography and in manuscript, and reprints thereof, reproductions of his designs, books with his engravings, catalogues, books he owned and scholarly and critical works about him* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.25.
[113] G.E. Bentley, *The Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). p. 22. See Frederick Tatham, 'Life of Blake' (c. 1832), first printed in A.G.B. Russell's edition of *Blake's Letters* (1906): cf. Bentley's notes on extracts from Tatham's work in *William Blake: The Critical Heritage*, pp.213-19.
[114] Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake:* pp.94-95.

Edmund Burke is important to 'the modern Conservative Party', William Godwin is resonant to 'anarchists', and Mary Wollstonecraft urgent for twentieth-century 'feminists.' [115] Moreover, Saree Makdisi argues that Blake thinks the eighteenth-century 'conception of rights', for all its promise with Thomas Paine, remains limited by focus on 'individual selfhood', which, Makdisi adds, may mean the modernist critique of bourgeois culture is partly Blakean.[116] Political relations between Woolf's and Blake's periods are therefore rich and complex.

Due to points of continuity between Woolf and the nineteenth-century response to Blake, this chapter chronologically traces that nineteenth-century response to Blake in order to contextualize Woolf's position. While the nineteenth-century response to Blake is this chapter's subject, I try throughout to foreground its relevance to Woolf, keeping in mind her view of these nineteenth-century Blakeans, and how that informs her interest in Blake. Gilchrist's Peckham Rye story illustrates one of these points of continuity already. He thinks that Blake's 'childish years', in which he may have seen 'a tree filled with angels', might 'elucidate' his 'later years' because Blake, as a 'grown man' viewed the world 'as unaffectedly as ever had the boy of ten.' Though questionable to deny Blake a period of maturity as an artist, Gilchrist's story was potent and resonant. Edward Thomas retells it in *A Literary Pilgrim in England,* which brings it to Woolf's attention in 1917. Moreover, when Woolf and Walter De La Mare describe Blake as 'visionary' rather than 'intellectual' they are interested in the idea, popularised by Gilchrist in 1863, that a childlike quality makes Blake exceptional.

[115] Claire Grogan, 'Introduction', in Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (Toronto: Broadview, 2011).
[116] Saree Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp.5-6.

In 1863 Blake is still being marginalised, for which one example will suffice. In *Modern Painters: Volume III*, John Ruskin (whose views on Blake I discuss in more detail later in this chapter), uses Blake only in passing to support his claim that Dürer was always most effective in 'dark engraving':

> Blake, perfectly powerful in the etched grotesque of the book of Job, fails always more or less as soon as he adds colour; not merely for want of power (his eye for colour being naturally good), but because his subjects seem, in a sort, insusceptible of completion. [117]

Leonard and Virginia Woolf owned four of the five volumes of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* series (see my third appendix). Blake thinks colour divides strong and weak forms of aesthetic judgement and strong and weak artists. He writes in his 1809 *Descriptive Catalogue:* 'the eye that can prefer the Colouring of Titian and Rubens to that of Michael Angelo and Rafael, ought to be modest and to doubt its own powers' (CPPWB DC 529). As Jane Goldman argues, colour is important to Woolf's aesthetics, because it enables a challenge to chiaroscuro in Western European painting which Woolf knew enforced patriarchal contrasts: 'light denotes good or positive values, shade negative or evil.'[118] Ruskin assesses Blake primarily according to Renaissance aesthetic standards, whereas Gilchrist treats him as an eighteenth-century radical.

2.2. Matthew Arnold's hostility to Romanticism

In 1865, in *Essays in Criticism: first series*, Matthew Arnold rejects all Romantic poets. Woolf had this book in her library (see my third appendix).[119] Arnold argues, quite unfairly, that the Romantic poets are to be denounced for their 'prematureness', that despite all their 'energy' and 'creative force' they lacked 'sufficient materials' to achieve their potential,

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[117] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Volume 3*, (New York: John Wiley, 1863), p.102
[118] Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 8
[119] Cf. Steve Ellis discusses Arnold as part of his argument that Woolf is 'post-Victorian', rather than 'modernist', in *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2007), pp.9-10

meaning their poetry is 'incoherent', lacking 'completeness and variety.'[120] Arnold does not mention Blake by name as an example, but his argument that the avant-garde impetus of Romanticism is too ambitious implies that the society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was not ready for such radical poetry.

Harold Bloom rightly defends the Romantics against Arnold's unfair view in 1961, asserting that the Romantics never 'wasted themselves in ignorance.'[121] However, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Arnold remains influential. Adopting Arnold's position on Romanticism, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce make a challenge to Blake specifically. Only with the publication of Algernon Charles Swinburne's 1868 *William Blake: a Critical Essay,* is Blake at last celebrated as a modern and extremely innovative poet, whose 'perplexity and offence' and energetic 'mist and fire' exceed even Shelley's radicalism. [122]

2.3. Ralph Waldo Emerson on Blake's 'Natural Objects'

In addition to Gilchrist and Swinburne's writing on Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay 'Inspiration' (1870) offers a highly specific example of a nineteenth-century figure anticipating Woolf's interest in Blake in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque.' Emerson's essay on 'Inspiration' is represented in Woolf's library and I list the relevant volume in my third appendix. Emerson cites Blake's comment about 'Natural Objects', originally an annotated response to Wordsworth, to discuss the aesthetics of sublime inspiration taken from nature:

> Certain localities, as mountain-tops, the seaside, the shores of rivers and rapid brooks, natural parks of oak and pine, where the ground is smooth and unencumbered, are excitants of the muse. Every artist knows well some favourite retirement and yet the experience of some good artists has taught them to prefer the smallest and plainest chamber, with one chair and table and no outlook, to these

[120] Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of criticism in the present time', in *Essays in Criticism: First Series* (London: Macmillan, 1865), p.7
[121] Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), pp. xiii-xiv.
[122] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *William Blake: a critical essay* (London: J.C. Hotten, 1868), p.3

> picturesque liberties. William Blake said, "Natural objects always did and do weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in me."[123]

Woolf's library contains editions of Emerson's essays (see my second appendix). Since she was interested in reading further, via Henry Crabb Robinson, about Blake's marginalia to Wordsworth, it almost certainly interests Woolf that Emerson quotes the same piece of marginalia.

Emerson thinks Blake is calling for an austere artistic practice, where the artist's imagination is more tightly controlled than is possible before the 'picturesque liberties' of the natural landscape. Emerson rightly intuits an image of Blake rarely venturing into nature for inspiration, spending most of his time honing his poetic and visual craft at home, but it would be incorrect of course to describe Blake's aesthetic style as austere. According to Graham Clarke, Emerson had an ideological view of the natural American landscape because, like modern American democracy, it promises a 'new sense of awareness and experience.'[124] Woolf by contrast is interested in the English natural landscape. Furthermore, while Emerson views Europe as part of his cultural past, he also, as Wesley T. Mott notes, disparages the industrial revolution, Europe's 'headlong rush into modernity', which Blake rejects in his famous image of destructive 'Satanic Mills.' [125]

Emerson's implicit claim that Blake rarely spends any time in nature is right. Blake only lived outside London from 1800 to 1804, a time when he was supported by the poet laureate Sir William Hayley (1745-1820). Except for those years, Blake never travels further from central London than Hampstead. Both Woolf in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' and Emerson in 'Inspiration', find it stimulating to reflect on Blake's imaginative independence from the

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[123] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Inspiration' in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), pp. 290-91.
[124] Graham Clarke (ed.) 'Ralph Waldo Emerson', in *The American Landscape: Literary Sources and documents: Volume 2* (East Sussex: Helm, 1993), p.3.
[125] Wesley T. Mott, 'Britain' in *Ralph Waldo Emerson in Context*, T. Mott. (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.23

world of 'Natural Objects.' Woolf develops Emerson's statement by also questioning the idea that exact empirical locations for the origin of Blake's images can be identified.

However, Woolf is not saying Blake's images have no correspondence to the real world. She is merely indicating that the relation of his images to places is complex. Woolf also considers Emerson a model for the writer's imagination. In 'Emerson's Journals' (1910), she writes: 'His sentences are made up of hard fragments each of which has been matched separately with the vision in his head.' (E I 338)[126] She finds he wields too much control over his writing, focusing his 'concentration' intensely 'upon a few things', to create 'exaltation' and 'truth', but she distrusts his distortion of 'familiar things.' (E I 339).

Woolf admires Blake's challenges to the supremacy of 'Natural Objects' as source material for poetic images but finds in contrast that Emerson becomes too distant from the immediate, transporting readers to a 'peak above the world' where 'all familiar things have shrunk into pinheads and faint greys and pinks upon the flat.' (E I 339). Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, writes that Emerson lacked a 'harmonious or consistent system of thought.'[127] Despite her respect for Emerson, Woolf's view is similar. She wonders if Emerson actually 'does not understand' the 'beauty' he perceives with such visionary power. (E I 339). Yet, as Rosemary Luttrell notes, Emerson's visionary theory may be important to Woolf for offering a model of how 'one might see beyond the subjective.' [128] Our focus however is on what Woolf might have read in Emerson about Blake and how Woolf's and Emerson's views on Blake compare.

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[126] Virginia Woolf, 'Emerson's Journal', *TLS*, (3 March 1910), a review of the *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, with annotations*, Edward Waldo Emerson, and Waldo Emerson Forbes, (eds.): *Volume I: 1820-24*, and *Volume II: 1824-32* (London: Constable & Co, 1909, 1910). For this 1910 piece, Woolf also looked at: James Elliot Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* in two volumes (London: Macmillan, 1887).
[127] Leslie Stephen, *Studies of a biographer* (London: Duckworth, 1902), p.167
[128] Rosemary Luttrell, 'Virginia Woolf's Emersonian metaphors of Sight in *To the Lighthouse*: Visionary Oscillation' in *Journal of Modern Literature* Vo.36, No.3 (Spring 2013), 69-80. (71)

As Randi Salmon points out, Woolf develops her own essay partly through a rich continuity with Emerson's 'essayistic mode.' [129]

2.4. John Ruskin on Blake as poet and painter

In his Oxford lecture 'Of Wisdom and Folly in Art', on 10 February 1872, John Ruskin takes an interest in Blake as a poet and a painter. [130] Woolf has access to an extract of Ruskin's lecture via her personal copy of a selection of Ruskin's literary criticism. [131] This extract provides us with an understanding of Ruskin's perspective on Blake:

> BLAKE
>
> You must have nearly all heard of, many must have seen, the singular paintings; some also may have read the poems, of William Blake. The impression that his drawings once made is fast, and justly, fading away, though they are not without noble merit. But his poems have much more than merit; they are written with absolute sincerity, with infinite tenderness, and, though in the manner of them diseased and wild, are in verity the words of a great and wise mind, disturbed, but not deceived, by its sickness; nay, partly exalted by it, and sometimes giving forth in fiery aphorism some of the most precious words of existing literature. One of these passages I will ask you to remember it; it will often be serviceable to you—
>
> Doth the Eagle know what is in the pit,
>
> Or wilt though go ask the Mole?
>
> It would be impossible to express to you in briefer terms the great truth that there is a different kind of knowledge good for every different creature, and that the glory of the higher creatures, is in ignorance of what is known to the lower.[132]

Ruskin quotes Blake's first two lines from the quatrain, 'Thel's Motto', that introduces one of his very earliest illuminated works, *The Book of Thel* (1789). Woolf's copy of *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake* reprints Blake's quatrain in full, in the section entitled 'Epigrams, Quatrains and Couplets' (See my second appendix).

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[129] Randi Saloman, *Virginia Woolf's Essayism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p.2
[130] See John Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest, Ten Lectures on the relation of Natural Science to Art* (New York: J.W. Lovell & Co. 1886).
[131] John Ruskin, *Ruskin as Literary Critic: Selections*, A.H. R. Ball (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), p.v
[132] *Ruskin as Literary Critic*, p. 264.

Ruskin presents Blake's words as 'the most precious words of existing literature.' What Ruskin and Emerson offer Woolf is a dedicated belief in the importance of Blake's poetry. However, Ruskin is more confident of Blake's poetry than his visual art. He worries that the bold 'impression' and 'noble merit' of Blake's drawings is 'fading away.' Moreover, he entertains a contradiction central to thinking of Blake as a visionary. He argues Blake's poetic 'manner' is 'diseased and wild' but that his impressive 'sincerity' and 'infinite tenderness' allow Blake to write 'exalted' verse. Instead of a mad poet, Ruskin describes a 'great and wise mind disturbed, but not deceived, by its sickness.' By a curious inversion, Ruskin thinks Blake's flirtations with the 'diseased and wild', only make him the sanest example of visionary poet.

In addition to being a critic of Blake's work, Ruskin is a Blakean writer. As Edward Alexander explains, Blake and Ruskin both dislike 'the doctrine that generalisation leads not merely to grandeur but to truth.' [133] Ruskin therefore isolates specific lines that best illustrate Blake's 'precious words.' In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf also discusses Ruskin's responses to the natural world, implicitly comparing Ruskin's poetics to Blake's. Discussing 'the word-painter's gift', closely linked to that 'twin gift' mentioned in her 1940 note on Blake, Woolf says that Ruskin 'did the description pure and simple to perfection.' (E II 163). In the essay 'Ruskin Looks Back on Life' (1927), Woolf remains interested in his treatment of natural phenomena and objects: 'He revels in the description of changing clouds and falling waters, and yet fastens his eye to the petals of a daisy with the minute tenacity of a microscope' (E IV 503). She is identifying a Blakean specificity in Ruskin's literary and

[133] Edward Alexander, 'Ruskin and Science', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 64 No.3 (July, 1969), 508-521 (515)

pictorial aesthetics. As Gillian Beer comments, Woolf admires Ruskin's 'joyous zeal in particularising.'[134]

However, in 'Ruskin', posthumously published in *The Captain's Death Bed* (1950), Woolf claims that Ruskin is ostracized by Victorian culture: 'Genius was nearly as anti-social and demanded almost as drastic a separation from the ordinary duties of mankind as insanity.' (E VI 460).[135] Woolf concludes enforced isolation gave Ruskin the 'bitter consciousness' of a 'prophet', making him displace his artistic talent when 'denouncing' his age and his generation. She feels an ambivalence about Ruskin that many other modernists felt. As Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls warn, the most 'emphatic' sounding 'dismissals' of Ruskin from modernists may only show how central he is to their aesthetics. [136]

2.5. Blake's role in Walter Pater's aesthetic criticism

In 1872, Walter Pater, Ruskin's close contemporary, reviews Sidney Colvin's art historical work *Children in Italian and English Design* (1872). He is impressed by the facsimile reproductions of plates from Blake's the *Songs of Innocence* (1789), reproductions that add the visual imagery usually not included in standard Victorian reprints of Blake's poetry. He observes Blake's 'singular mélange of design and verse' that creates 'bewildered beauties' and a 'peculiar mingling of sweetness and strangeness'[137] Such interest in Blake's form is

[134]Gillian Beer, 'The Victorians in Virginia Woolf: 1832-1941', in *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 146.
[135] Virginia Woolf, *The Captains Death Bed*, Leonard Woolf (ed), (London: Hogarth Press, 1950).
[136] Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls, (eds.), *Ruskin and Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. xii. Also on Ruskin and modernism, see Dinah Birch, *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern*, (Oxford (Oxford University Press, 1999). On Ruskin and Blake see also: Susan Gurewitsch, 'Golgonooza on the Grand Canal: Ruskin's Stones of Venice and the Romantic Imagination', *The Arnoldian: A Review of Mid-Victorian Culture*, Vol. 9. No. 1 (Winter 1981), 25-39. Francis O' Gorman, 'A Blakean Allusion in Ruskin's "Fors Clavigera", *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 42 No. 2 (1995), 175-76; Marcia Allentuck, 'Ruskin and Blake again: Unpublished Sources Not in Bentley', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, University of Chicago Press (1981); 75.4., 447-448.

[137] Walter Pater, 'Review of *Children in Italian and English Design* by Sidney Colvin (London: 1872)', reprinted in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, Donald L. Hill (ed.), (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980), p. 192.

characteristic of the 1870s. In 1874, Algernon Charles Swinburne writes to Blake scholar William Michael Rosetti, brother of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, to praise the formal achievements of Blake's illuminated books, namely their 'unity and indivisibility (as of the republic itself)', that combines 'two forms', visual and verbal, in a 'single mould' thus perfectly encapsulating the 'thought' to be 'fused together' with corresponding 'types used to express and set it forth.'[138] With his reference to an ideal 'republic itself', Swinburne's is a much more politicised view of Blake's visual and verbal form than Pater's. The intimate unity of visual and verbal form described by Swinburne and Pater comes to be known in twentieth and twenty-first-century Blake scholarship as his 'composite art.'[139] Woolf describes the same thing in her late 1940 on 'seeing & writing' in Blake. This 'composite art' is comparable to what Kathryn N. Benzel describes as Woolf's 'verbal painting.'[140]

After his review of Colvin's book, Pater returns to Blake in *The Renaissance*: *Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873), quoting Blake to define the preoccupations of the 'aesthetic critic':

> In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? Where was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation, its taste? "The ages are all equal," says William Blake, "but genius is always above its age."[141]

In 1940, in her notes for 'Reading at Random. Or Turning the Page', Woolf explains the experimental method will be to 'find the end of a ball of string & wind out', to 'Let one book suggest another', to 'follow the genuine scent – the idea of the moment.' [142] These are all associative habits of Pater's 'aesthetic critic.' Pater's ideal 'aesthetic critic' will examine the subjective 'impression' they form in response to the aesthetic object, more than the historical

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[138]Algernon Charles Swinburne, *The Swinburne Letters vol.2*, Cecil Y. Lang (ed.), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p.311.
[139] See Jean Hagstrum, *William Blake: Poet and Painter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) and W.J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the illuminated Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978).
[140] Kathryn N. Benzel 'Verbal Painting in "Blue & Green" and "Monday or Tuesday", in *Virginia Woolf's Short Fiction* Kathryn N. Benzel and Ruth Hoberman (ed.), (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 157-174.
[141] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, p.xxi.

[142]Silver, '"Anon" and "The Reader"', (373)

context and significance of the aesthetic object itself. [143] Blake's two-fold assertion that all artistic 'ages' are to be considered 'equal' and that 'genius' is a category that transcends the narrow interests of each age, helps Pater to rhetorically justify the transhistorical comparisons he pursues in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*.

To take an example, Pater explores a transhistorical comparison between Blake and Michelangelo, designed to foreground Michelangelo's 'austere genius' in avoiding all ornate aesthetic embellishments: 'He has traced no flowers, like those with which Leonardo stars over his gloomiest rocks; nothing like the fretwork of wings and flames in which Blake frames his most startling conceptions.'[144] When mentioning Blake's 'startling conception', Pater is thinking partly of those reproductions he discovered in the book by Sidney Colvin. The notion of 'austere' art subtly alludes to Michelangelo's statement in a sonnet: 'Not even the best of artists has any conception that a single marble block does not contain within its excess, and that is only attained by the hand that obeys the intellect.'[145] Pater entertains Michelangelo's view that the artist's material already contains the necessary ideas and form. Yet in contrast, Pater views Blake and Leonardo as exuberant artists similarly unable to match Michelangelo's austere aesthetic control. Woolf's 1940 note explicitly comparing Blake, Michelangelo and Leonardo, both artists of 'seeing & writing', therefore echoes Pater's comparison between Blake and Michelangelo. She continues to read Pater in her late period, commenting in her diary on 13 July 1939, that she is using her spare time to 'read Pascal & Pater'. (D V 226).

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[143] Pater, *The Renaissance:* p.xix. On Pater's historical and critical method J. Hillis Miller, 'Walter Pater: a Partial Portrait', *Daedalus*, Vol. 105 No. 1, In Praise of Books (Winter, 1976), 97-113; Kenneth Clark' 'Walter Pater' in *Moments of Vision* (London: John Murray, 1981), pp. 130-142; Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
[144] Pater, *The Renaissance*, p.58.
[145] Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Poetry of Michelangelo: An annotated Translation*, J.M. Saslow (trans.) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 35.

Moreover, the transhistorical comparison she makes in 1934, between Walter Sickert on the one hand, and Blake and Shelley on the other, has all the sensuous characteristics of Pater's 'aesthetic critic.' Woolf's supplementary use of Blake to define Walter Sickert follows Pater's inclination to use Blake to characterize Michelangelo. Both Woolf and Pater use Blake to pursue their own subjective 'impression' of a visual artist. Pater uses Blake to clarify Michelangelo's aesthetic, Woolf, to better capture Sickert's signature style. Woolf's sharing with Pater a resistance to conventional artistic periodisation therefore has a Blakean aspect. Such points of continuity between Pater and Woolf on Blake are to be explained by Woolf modelling her own approach to an essay on Pater, as she does to an extent with Emerson as well. Woolf makes her respect for Pater clear in 'The Modern Essay' (1922), where she claims it is not, for example, his expansive 'knowledge of Leonardo' that gives Pater convincing 'authority', but rather his 'arduous' insistence on eradicating all 'extraneous matter' which allows the reader to perceive his 'vision' that gives his essays 'shape and intensity.' (E IV 217).[146]

Both Pater and Woolf quote Blake's marginalia, subtly shifting its context and meaning. Woolf enthusiastically quotes Blake's marginalia to Wordsworth in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque.' Blake's statement about 'artist' and 'age', cited by Pater above, is originally an annotation to Sir Joshua Reynolds's third Discourse, an annual lecture on 14 December 1770, for students of the Royal Academy in London. Blake enrols in the Royal Academy towards the end of the 1770s. He makes his annotations to Reynolds much later in a 1798 edition of the Discourses. [147] Through these very negative comments, Blake is finally articulating the

[146] A review of *Modern English Essays 1870 to 1920* (5 vols, J. M. Dent, 1922), edited by Ernest J. Rhys (1850-1946), founding editor of the Everyman Library. The volume included Pater's essay 'Notes on Leonardo Da Vinci' (1869), printed earlier in *The Renaissance*. See Stuart N. Clarke's note (E4, 225).
[147] Joshua Reynolds, *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Edmond Malone (ed.), (London: T. Cadell, 1798).

vitriol he felt towards Reynolds who, as founder and President of the Royal Academy, was partly responsible for the training in the visual arts which Blake found uninspiring.

It is the reputation of the German Renaissance painter and printmaker, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) that is at stake in Blake's disagreement with Reynolds. This context is lost in Pater's quotation of the annotation, whereas from Woolf's quotation of Blake on 'Natural Objects', it is easier to ascertain that Blake's view of poetic inspiration is different from that of Wordsworth. Reynolds argues that Dürer's work would benefit from the 'great principles' in painting and printmaking exemplified 'by his contemporaries in Italy.' [148] As we see from the transcription of Reynolds's words alongside Blake's (Reynolds's words first in smaller font), Blake challenges the idea that Durer need model his work on the aesthetic demands of his age:

> would, probably, have been one of the first painters of his age, (and he lived in an era of great artists,) had he been initiated into those great principles…
>
> What does this mean "*Would have been*" *one of* the *first painters of his age*" Albert Durer *Is*! Not would have been! Besides. Let them look at Gothic Figures & Gothic Buildings. & not talk of Dark Ages or of Any Age! Ages are all Equal. But Genius is Always Above the Age (CPPWB Marg. 649).

Woolf owned a copy of Reynold's lectures, introduced by Roger Fry with a commentary for each lecture. In response to the third discourse Fry opposes Reynold's 'explanation of the necessity for generalisation in works of the grand or imaginative style.'[149] Fry's sympathies lie with Blake. He is also sceptical that a great artist like Dürer need follow any general set of aesthetic principles. Like Blake, Fry thinks an artist can have merit on their own terms.

2.6. Oscar Wilde on Blake

In 1882, in a lecture heavily influenced by Pater, *The English Renaissance of Art*, Oscar Wilde identifies all 'the simple directness of nineteenth-century prose' in Blake's oft cited

[148] Joshua Reynolds, 'The Third Discourse', in *Reynolds' Discourses* (London: Walter Scott, 1887), p. 36.
[149] Roger Fry, 'Preface', *Discourses: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy* (London: Seeley & Co, 1905), p.45.

annotation to Reynolds: 'to generalise is to be an idiot.'[150] In both Pater and Wilde, writing criticism about the aesthetic object with a sensuous, transhistorical focus, is a Blakean resistance to generalisation. Wilde also explores one of Blake's central aesthetic ideas, namely the 'bounding line', which Wilde understands to be a description of the 'sense of limitation' and 'clearness of vision' that are 'the characteristics of the real artist.'[151]

In the *Descriptive Catalogue* which accompanied his 1809 solo exhibition, Blake describes the 'bounding line' as the 'great and golden rule of art, as well as of life': 'That the more distinct, sharp and defined the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism and bungling.' (CPPWB DC 550). Blake thinks the 'bounding line' allows great painters to be confident in their unique aesthetic achievements. David V. Erdman writes that the paradox of Blake's 'bounding line' is its 'delineating through movement.'[152] Blake imagines the 'bounding line' as an aesthetically constraint that is simultaneously a vitalising pictorial line of 'infinite inflexions and movements.' (CPPWB DC 550).

Whereas Wilde borrows Blake's language to make a similar claim, Pater develops his own term in the 'postscript' to *The Renaissance*: *Studies in Art and Poetry*, where he writes: 'To burn always with the intensity of this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.'[153] Edward J. Rose rightly concludes that Blake saw the 'bounding line' as 'the salvation of man and of art.'[154] Both aesthetic, and theological, Blake also calls the 'bounding line' the 'line of almighty.' Both Pater and Blake devise metaphorical terms to

[150] Originally a lecture at the Chickering Hall, New York, 9 January 1882: Oscar Wilde, *Essays and lectures* (London: Methuen, 1908), p.111.
[151] Wilde, *Essays and lectures,* p.109.
[152] David V. Erdman, 'Minute Particulars: South Bounding!', *Blake: an Illustrated Quarterly* Vol. 13, No. 2 (Fall 1979)
[153] Pater, *The Renaissance*, p. 189.
[154] Edward J. Rose, 'The Spirit of The Bounding Line: Blake's Los', *Criticism*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (Winter 1971), 54-76 (54)

intensify their aesthetic and ethical standards. When, in her 'The Modern Essay', Woolf praises Pater's 'vision', she implicitly endorses his standard of the 'hard, gem-like flame.'

While I need to discuss what nineteenth-century aestheticists who believe in art for art's sake, a group in which I include Ruskin, Pater, and Wilde, have to say about Blake, by 1909 Woolf already considers their writing to be, if not old fashioned, then at least historic and of the past. In 'Masques and Phases' (1909), she writes that 'The Yellow Book, Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, with their distinction and their limitations are of yesterday, […] the pale shade of Walter Pater in their midst, controlling their revels' (E VI 371).[155] Woolf is not interested in the debates about aestheticism. She is simply intrigued by Wilde and Pater as Victorian writers who still matter in the first decades of the twentieth century. While scholars, such as Laurel Brake have been exercised by the Marxist argument against aestheticism, that its 'claim of art to disinterestedness' is dangerously 'free of all moral, religious, and political designs on its audience', this need not concern us here.[156] Except to say Salim Kemall and Ivan Gaskell are correct, there is no easy separation between 'aesthetic and political judgements.'[157]

2.7. Anne Gilchrist on Blake

In 1886, in contrast to Pater, Wilde, Ruskin, and Emerson's appropriations of Blake, Anne Gilchrist, the widow of Blake's biographer Alexander Gilchrist, responds positively to an invitation to contribute an entry on Blake to the fifth volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB, 1885-1901), edited by Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) and

[155] *TLS* (1909), review of a book by journalist Robert Ross (1869-1918): *Masques & Phases* (London: L. Humphreys, 1909).
[156] Laurel Brake, *Walter Pater* (Plymouth: Northcote, 1994), p.4. For a political reading of Aestheticism see, Kristin Mahoney, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). On the relation of Aestheticism to modernism see Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
[157] Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, (eds.)., *Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.2.

Sidney Lee (1859-1926). After Alexander Gilchrist dies, she ensures his biography of Blake was published. When he dies in 1861, Alexander Gilchrist is still working on his biography, which is one reason the book has sources unacknowledged. In 1880, she also works with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his brother the Blake scholar William Michael Rossetti, and Frederick Shields, to produce the new 1880 edition.[158] In the fifth volume of the *DNB*, Anne Gilchrist's initials, A.G.T, are listed under the entry on Blake and she is credited in the volume's 'list of writers.' [159] Her writing is not only of interest to Blakeans. She meets and corresponds with Walt Whitman who, among American poets of the nineteenth century often seems closest to Blake.[160] In nineteenth-century continental Europe, the poet and adventurer Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) is the clear exponent of the Blakean visionary. In 1871, he insists all poets become visionaries through 'a long, gigantic and rational *derangement* of *all the senses*.'[161]

In her own library, Woolf had immediate access to Anne's brief biography, but the catalogue of Woolf's library contains no record that she owned Alexander Gilchrist's 1863 biography. Being steeped in Blake, Anne Gilchrist could make a very discriminate selection of material for her entry. Her decision not to mention the story about Blake seeing a tree with angels in Peckham Rye is therefore significant. Woolf's decision in 1917 to question this story that comes to be accepted from 1863 onwards, indicates her allegiance to Anne over Alexander's account of Blake's life. Although some scholars will argue that Anne Gilchrist omits Blake's vision of a tree because the editors of *DNB* enforce a limited word count, this story is highly

[158] Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake: Pictor Ignotus:* 2vols. (London: Macmillan, 1880).
[159] See 'List of Writers' at the beginning of *Dictionary of National Biography Volume 5: Bicheno-Bottisham* Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (ed.), (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1886).
[160] See *The Letters of Anne Gilchrist, Walt Whitman*, Thomas B Harned (ed.), (London: T.Fisher Unwin, 1918). On Whitman and Blake see Ryan J. Davidson, *Affinities of influence: exploring the relationship between Walt Whitman and William Blake* (PhD thesis: University of Glasgow, 2014).
[161] Arthur Rimbaud, 'From Letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May 1871'; reprinted in *Modernism: an anthology of sources and documents*, Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (eds.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p.110.

resonant because it is emblematic of Blake's visionary significance. It might be a conscious decision that Anne Gilchrist thinks about carefully. Both Woolf and Anne Gilchrist realise Blake's imagination cannot be confined.

2.8. Roger Fry on Blake

In 1886, as a young scholar at King's College, Cambridge, Roger Fry makes notes for a lecture on Blake, in which he laments the nineteenth-century reception of Blake:

> One cannot but regret that such a man should be in or out of fashion. And whatever eulogies we now heap upon his name there is always an uncomfortable feeling that it is a case of our fathers having the slain prophet, that we are but whiting the sepulchre.[162]

As Deborah Dorfman argues, Alexander Gilchrist's response to Blake was 'moralistic' and 'didactic', to ensure Blake represented an 'exemplary life' palatable to a puritan Victorian audience, which also means Blake is being made available to a large audience 'whether or not they cared for Blake's poetry and painting.'[163]

In his note quoted above, Fry has similar concerns about authentic appreciation for Blake. Though he does not name Alexander Gilchrist explicitly, he is likely one of the writers whom Fry worries will reduce the radical Blake who is a 'prophet' through idealistic 'eulogies', fraught acts of 'whiting the sepulchre.' The Pre-Raphaelites and the Aestheticists share Fry's determination to maintain Blake's radicalism, but even some of their interventions seem extreme, such as Frederick J. Shields and Dante Gabriel Rosetti's attempts in 1880 to memorialise, in painting and poetry, the very last room, on the Strand, in which Blake lived and worked.[164] They effectively exploit the space of Blake's last home in London for their

[162] My transcription of an autograph manuscript housed in Kings College Archive Centre, University of Cambridge, catalogued as: 'William Blake, 1886', *The Papers of Roger Fry*.
[163] Deborah Dorfman, *Blake in the Nineteenth Century: His Reputation as a Poet From Gilchrist to Yeats* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 3
[164] See Robert N. Essick, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Frederic Shields and the spirit of William Blake', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 24 No. 2 (Summer 1986) pp.163-172.

own collaboration in art and poetry. Fry wishes to avoid complicity in creating such idealistic myths of visionary Blake.

2.9. Victorian to modern: Pater and W.B. Yeats on Blake

In 1886, Coventry Patmore writes an essay on the mystic protestant dissenter, Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), reprinted in that same volume of his essays Woolf reviews for the *TLS* in her 1921 essay 'Patmore's Criticism', discussed above. Patmore writes that Swedenborg is an 'artist of the Blake type', but like 'Blake on a colossal scale', able to bring 'imaginative insight' to what is 'hidden from our present consciousness'; the 'unknown capacities' of 'mind and heart'; to create an 'actual vision of heights and depths of paint and joy, of beauty and terror.'[165] Though Patmore's praise is particularly for Swedenborg rather than Blake, his exaggerated language serves as another fine example of the rhetoric used to idealise Blake as a visionary poet and painter.

Swedenborg was of course a significant influence on Blake, even if Blake also challenges Swedenborg's theology. The founder in the eighteenth century of the Church of the New Jerusalem, Swedenborg had a dedicated following which at times included William and Catherine Blake. Their names are on a letter circulated to advertise the inaugural conference of the Church of the New Jerusalem at Great East Cheap in 1789. [166] Despite what Patmore says, Blake's work, including his annotations to Swedenborg, may actually amplify Swedenborg's ideas. Implicitly, in her review of Patmore's book, by challenging his rejection of Blake as an 'idiot', Woolf also challenges the notion of needing to choose between Blake and Swedenborg, who are both significant protestant dissenters. The similarities and

[165] Patmore, *Courage in Politics*, p. 103. An essay first printed in St James, Gazette, (16 April 1886).
[166] On Blake and Swedenborg, See Mark Schorer, 'Swedenborg and Blake', *Modern Philology*, Volume 36, Number 2, (Nov, 1938), 157-178; David V. Erdman, 'Blake's Early Swedenborgianism: A Twentieth-Century Legend,', *Comparative Literature* Vol. 5 No.3 (Summer 1953), 247-57; G.E. Bentley, 'Blake and Swedenborg', *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 199 (1 June 1954), pp.264-265;Harvey Bellin and Darrel Ruhl (eds.), *Blake and Swedenborg: Opposition is true Friendship* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1985).

differences between Blake and Swedenborg preoccupy both nineteenth and early twentieth-century Blakeans.

Born one year before Roger Fry, W.B. Yeats (1865–1939) is similarly both partly Victorian and partly modern. As Anne Fogarty points out, Yeats is both 'inside and outside' modernism.[167]Both Fry and Yeats find their careers underway at the turn of the century, whereas Walter Pater is of an earlier generation. Born in 1839, he dies in 1894, without witnessing the flourishing of modernism he had to a great extent prompted. In 1889, in *Appreciations* (1889), Pater returns to Blake, stating that 'in the last century', Blake's work provides 'an instance of preponderating soul, embarrassed, at a loss, in an era of preponderating mind.'[168] Towards the end of *Appreciations,* he further describes Blake as a 'noticeable phenomenon' in the eighteenth century because he does not fit in an age considered 'almost exclusively a classical period.'[169] Here, Pater builds on his thoughts in *The Renaissance,* by endorsing Blake within as an instance of 'genius' always able to transcend the aesthetic limitations of the artist's age.

Yet whereas Woolf focuses on 'mind', when trying to decipher what makes Blake distinct in 'Flumina amem Silvasque', Pater focuses in *Appreciations* on the term 'soul.' If Woolf therefore diverges from the focus of Pater's writing on Blake, it helps to add that Woolf uses the term 'mind' in its standard, general sense, whereas for Pater 'soul' and 'mind' are quite specific concepts. According to Catherine Neale, Pater thinks 'mind' and 'soul' must both be understood as of equal 'necessity' to the completion of 'literary productions.'[170] By contrast, Jean Michel Rabaté sees 'mind' as a more important term for understanding Pater because it

[167] Anne Fogarty, 'Yeats, Ireland and modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry* Alex Davis (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.126
[168] Pater, *Appreciations with an Essay on Style* (London: Macmillan, 1889), p. 25. cf. Walter Pater's essay 'Style', first published: *Fortnightly Review*, (1 December 1888).
[169] Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 257.
[170] Catherine Neale, *Walter Pater: A Study in Literary Method* (Edinburgh: PhD Thesis, 1980), p. 269.

stands for the 'supreme subjectivity' Pater wants to recreate, one that wavers 'between moods and impressions.'[171]

By 'mind' Pater means the characteristics of a text or artwork that affect all members of the audience in the same way, but he thinks 'soul' acts 'capriciously' with a 'vagrant sympathy' that will strongly impact some individuals and have no impact on others.[172] It is also vitalising since it can 'enkindle words to various degrees, and when it really takes hold of them doubles it force.'[173] By describing Blake as an artist of 'soul' over 'mind', he aligns Blake with the 'religious persuasion' of 'the English Bible, the English Prayer-Book, the writings of Swedenborg.'[174] In linking Blake and Swedenborg, Pater is far more sensitive than Coventry Patmore. He understands there is complexity to the relation of Blake and Swedenborg, rather than insisting on disparaging one and idealising the other. He allows both Blake and Swedenborg to be major visionaries.

In 1893, W.B. Yeats, in collaboration with Edwin J. Ellis, published a highly ambitious edition of Blake, the most comprehensive representation of Blake's poetry produced in the nineteenth century, especially commendable for including monochrome facsimiles of the illuminated works. [175] It is the most ambitious nineteenth-century response to Blake since Alexander Gilchrist's 1863 biography. As G.E. Bentley observes, Yeats and Ellis provide a critical commentary in their edition which has a negative effect, creating an 'unreal' account of Blake's life and work. [176] More immediately relevant to Woolf's interest in Blake, in 1897

[171] Jean Michel Rabaté, *The Pathos of Distance: the affects of the moderns* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p.22
[172] Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 25.
[173] Ibid, p.25.
[174] Ibid, p. 26.
[175] See W.B. Yeats and Edwin J. Ellis' collaboration as editors for the first attempt, now obsolete, at a complete Blake: *The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical:* in three vols (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893). Cf. Edwin J. Ellis, *The Real Blake* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1907).
[176]G.E. Bentley, (ed.), 'Blake's reputation and its interpreters' (1958), *Blake books*, p. 30.

Yeats writes an essay on Blake, subsequently reprinted in a collection of his essays, of which Woolf owned a copy, entitled *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903).[177]

On 7 November 1930, Woolf meets Yeats at a party at the home of Lady Ottoline Morell. Her diary entry on 8 November describes that she felt 'some emotion' bidding Yeats farewell because: 'This is to press a famous hand.' (D III 329). At the party, they discuss the 'poems we could come back to unsated.' (D III 330). Woolf tells Yeats that Milton's great elegy 'Lycidas' (1638) is her example: 'Yeats said he could not get satisfaction from Milton; it was Latinised poetry (as somebody said, Milton had (in some way irreparably) damaged the English language)' (D III 330). Woolf creates a confusion about who is speaking in this party conversation. We know it is Yeats saying he is never satisfied by Milton's 'Latinised poetry', but the other opinions mix Yeats's statement with other voices, either at the party or cited from elsewhere. The opinion that Milton permanently 'damaged the English language' is strikingly close to T.S. Eliot's claim, discussed earlier, that Milton effected a 'dissociation of sensibility' in English poetry from which all subsequent periods of poetry try desperately to recover. [178] Dismissed as Anglican 'nostalgia' by Frank Kermode, Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility' has also come under attack from Leonard Diepeveen for being a historically 'unverifiable' argument.[179] Eliot continues to rethink his position on Milton, including in one text published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press. [180]

Four years later, on 25 October 1934, Woolf and Yeats meet, once again at a social gathering in Ottoline Morell's home. Woolf's diary entry for 26 October emphasises this was a meeting

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[177] William Butler Yeats, 'Academy Portraits, XXXII-William Blake.' *Academy*, LI (1897), 634-5, reprinted as, 'William Blake and the Imagination', *Ideas of Good and Evil* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1903), pp.168-175.
[178] Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', *Selected Essays*, p.288.
[179] Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image*, (London: Routledge, 1957), p. 168: Leonard Diepeveen, 'Taking Literature Seriously: Essays to 1927', in *A Companion to T.S. Eliot*, David E. Chinitz (ed.), (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p.270
[180] Eliot, *Homage to John Dryden*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1924). For a volume collecting Eliot's later reflections first expressed in 'The Metaphysical Poets', see: *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, Ronald Schuchard (ed.), (London: Faber, 1993).

with ‘Old Yeats’: ‘What he said was, he had been writing about me. The Waves. That comes after Stendhal he said. I see what you’re at – But I want more humanity.’ (D IV 255). According to Woolf, Yeats also tells her, ‘I’m trying to get the Irish back to the great men of the 18th Century’, which stimulates an exchange between them about what ‘made Irish different from English’, concluded by Woolf with a lament: ‘Oh the bitterness against England.’ (D IV 255). Clearly, Yeats’s view – in 1934 – of the difference between an English and Irish literary tradition is fiercely political. When in 1897, he repeats claims similar to those of his 1893 critical essays, that Blake was ‘probably an Irishman’, we ought to consider this a political statement. [181]

Yeats claims that due to the paucity of the eighteenth-century imagination in England, Blake ‘spoke confusedly and obscurely’, unable to find ‘models’ for his vision ‘in the world about him.’[182] He thinks it would have suited Blake to be ‘a Catholic of Dante’s time’, or indeed ‘a scholar of our time’ who could then ‘have gone to Ireland’ to take ‘for his symbols the sacred mountains, along whose sides the peasant still sees enchanted fires.’[183] Yeats wants Blake to be seen within an Irish poetic tradition, based on folklore and oral poetry, because it is a tradition in which Blake’s potential could be realised.[184]

Of all the nineteenth-century thinkers mentioned in this chapter, Yeats therefore fashions his work most explicitly as Blakean. As Hazard Adams writes, one common thread between Blake and Yeats is that both try ambitiously to break through ‘present limitations of human understanding.’[185] Yvor Winters identifies in both a ‘bardic tone.’[186] Yet critics also qualify

[181] Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil*, p.168.
[182] Ibid, p.168.
[183] Ibid, p. 120-121.
[184] Ibid, p.173.
[185] Hazard Adams, *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1955), p.2. On Blake and Yeats, see also Margaret Rudd, *Divided Image: A Study of William Blake and W.B. Yeats* (London: Routledge, 1953)
[186] Yvor Winters, *The Poetry of W.B. Yeats* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1960), p.23.

Yeats's similarity to Blake. Harold Bloom, for example, when differentiating Yeats from Blake and Shelley because he lacks their engagement with 'religion in the Christian sense', argues that Yeats instead makes a 'religion' from Homeric devotion to 'hearth and blood-kindred, a feeling for the unity of life, and an acceptance of life as a tragedy.'[187] When Yeats calls for more 'humanity' in Woolf's writing, he is partly thinking of his own tragic philosophy.

Woolf's passing mention of Yeats 'writing about me. The Waves', is in reference to his introduction to the play *Fighting the Waves* (1934), in which he claims early twentieth century modernists break with the 'passive' and 'brutalised' fiction from the 'the end of the nineteenth century':

> Certain typical books – *Ulysses*, Mrs Virginia Woolf's *Waves*, Mr. Ezra Pound's Draft of XXX *Cantos* – suggest a philosophy like that of the Samkara school of ancient India, mental and physical objects alike material, a deluge of experience breaking over us and within us, melting limits whether of line or tint; man no hard bright mirror dawdling by the dry sticks of a hedge, but a swimmer, or rather the waves themselves. In this new literature announced with much else by Balzac in *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, as in that which it superseded, man in himself is nothing. [188]

Though it is not a point he makes explicitly in his criticism, Yeats thinks of both Blake and Woolf as visionary artists. In the first of Woolf's two diary entries above, in which she describes meeting Yeats, she also describes Yeats's complex theories of modern poetry and its relation to history and to civilisation. She mentions Yeats telling her that modern poets write 'thumbnail' poetry because they are 'at the end of an era', but she finds this a 'system of thought' that only makes sense 'in fragments.' (D III 330).

Yeats uses Blake for his own philosophy a decade earlier in *A Vision* (1925), in which he writes that Blake helps him to understand 'the world as conflict.'[189] He is thinking of Blake's

[187] Harold Bloom, *Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.65.
[188] W.B. Yeats *Wheels and Butterflies*, (London: Macmillan, 1934), p. 73
[189] W.B. Yeats *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1925), p.72.

assertion that contradiction is positive, when in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake writes: 'Without Contraries is no progression.' (CPPWB MHH 34). While Yeats makes a rational argument here in favour of Blake's visionary poetry, he understands, as Jerome McGann does, that 'visionary existence' is 'its own reward, self-generating, self-consuming.'[190] Her development of pacifist 'Mental fight', shows that Woolf agrees with Yeats and Blake that contradiction can have a positive end. However, Yeats is right that contradiction and conflict are central to Blake. As Michael Ferber remarks, Blake's figure of the 'arch-systematizer' called Urizen, deploys 'mental powers' solely to reproduce 'empty and rigid forms.'[191] Blake prefers contraries and contradiction to 'rigid forms.'

While Woolf is often sceptical of such complicated philosophies, likely to question for example Yeats's grand assertion that 'man in himself is nothing', nonetheless she is confident about Yeats's poetry, stating in 'How it Strikes a Contemporary' (1925) that Yeats's poems 'will survive.' (E IV 237). Although it is odd that Yeats suggests Woolf, Joyce, and Pound all adopt a standpoint similar to ancient Indian philosophy, his fundamental claim makes sense: modernist writers are interested in a 'deluge of experience' that renders 'mental and physical objects' indistinguishable. The fact that it is essential to move the discussion here on to Yeats's *A Vision* (1925) and *Fighting the Waves* (1934), demonstrates the practical impossibility of using chronology to separate Victorian and modernist opinion on Blake. Since I foreground Woolf's opinion on Yeats in these, it is also of crucial necessity to bring in these thoughts of Yeats on Blake and Woolf, even though I break with chronology. In the next chapter, I return to a chronological progression.

[190] Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p.151.
[191] Michael Ferber, *Blake's Apocatastasis: The Social Vision of William Blake*, (New Haven: Yale University Press 1985), p.43.

3: Blake in the twentieth century

When Yeats says, in *Ideas of Good and Evil*, that Blake could not find 'models' for his vision, he asserts that Blake is an avant-garde artist and poet. In his comments quoted above, in the introduction to *Fighting The Waves,* Yeats identifies Woolf, Joyce and Pound as leading avant-garde novelists, all of whom are his allies in taking Blake very seriously. As Hugh Kenner explains, Blake inspires Pound's poetic project because he represents a 'rare' form of practical 'zest for demarcation': 'William Blake did not daub but engraved, driving the burin through the metal; it could go wrong or right, but could not approximate.' [192] Kenner makes reference to Pound's interest in minimalist, modernist aesthetics, articulated by the famed imagist credo: 'It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.'[193] Whereas Kenner thinks Pound's modernism is vitalising, Geoffrey Hartman finds modernist poetics 'restrictive and reactionary', no match for the Romantics, the 'real iconoclasts' in poetry, who from 1750 to 1830 achieved 'free-standing lyric.'[194]

Like Oscar Wilde, Kenner explicitly uses the language of Blake's 'bounding line' to assert the same austere, strict aesthetic of 'austere genius' that Walter Pater also condenses with his image of the 'hard, gem-like flame.' With close attention to Woolf's modernist contemporaries like Pound and Joyce and others, in this chapter I build on the discussion of nineteenth-century responses to Blake by discussing chronologically the views of Woolf's modernist peers. As in the previous chapter, I discuss how the opinions of Woolf's contemporaries affect her position on Blake.

Woolf certainly tests her own views on Blake against the comments of her modernist peers, even if this is not always explicit in her essays. Modernist and Bloomsbury critics and artists

[192] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, (Berkely and London: University of California Press, 1971), p. 91
[193] Ezra Pound, 'A retrospect' (1918); reprinted in *Modernism: an Anthology of Sources and Documents*, p. 374
[194] Geoffrey Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 44.

are often ambivalent about Blake, admiring his radical example, but not entirely embracing it. In general, the modernists I include are interested in using Blake for their own critical purposes, rather than understanding him properly. Yet however much they distort him, most nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics and artists understand that Blake needs and deserves to be understood *sui generis.*

While Matthew Arnold opposes the poetics of Romanticism, Alexander Gilchrist's biography and Algernon Charles Swinburne's book, to name only the examples I cover above, both clearly established that Blake needs to be considered canonical. In 1900, Blake is recognized as such when ten of his poems, from *Poetical Sketches* and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, are included in *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1900* edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch. This was a major anthology that becomes a source text at universities for surveys of English poetry. Woolf owned a copy (see my third appendix).

3.1. James Joyce

Yet despite Quiller-Couch's volume being a record of Blake being established as a major poet in the early twentieth century, the Arnoldian questions about Romantic poetry continue to be explored and to affect perceptions of Blake. In 1902, in a speech at University College Dublin, specifically about the Irish poet James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849), James Joyce's statement on Romantic poetry reflects on the Arnoldian viewpoint. Joyce takes issue with the 'impatient temper' of the Romantics. [195] He thinks they struggle to let go of a restless, ambitious intelligence unable to find a 'fit abode' for its aims.

Like Arnold, Joyce identifies an immaturity in Romantic poets. He believes they pursue an excess indulgence in 'insensible figures' at the expense of 'certain limitations' that poetry

[195] James Joyce, 'James Clarence Mangan', an address for The Literary and Historical society of UCD, first published in *St. Stephen's*, V.1. no. 6 (May 1902) 116-18; reprinted in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellman (eds.), (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), p. 74.

needs. These thoughts about Romantic poetry reach a climax when Joyce says that however much the 'gift' of Romantic poets must be respected, 'the highest praise must be withheld from the Romantic school (though the most enlightened of Western poets be thereby passed over).'[196] In their footnote on Joyce's unexplained reference to 'the most enlightened of Western poets', Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellman cite the authority of James Joyce's brother, Stanislaus, who apparently informed them that Joyce's 'cryptic phrase' refers to Blake. [197]

Mason and Ellman's decision to trust this anecdotal evidence shows us partly that Joyce's statement positing a 'most enlightened of western poets' elicits critical explanation, but it also indicates the centrality of Blake in Joyce studies. One reason Mason and Ellman are confident in publishing this annotation is that like Woolf and Yeats, and many nineteenth-century critics on Blake, Joyce really wants to understand Blake's imagination. He considers Blake exceptional and it is makes sense to say Joyce believes Blake to be 'most enlightened.' As Gregg Hecimovich writes, Joyce was 'greatly influenced by Blake's aesthetic vision', particularly inspired by the idea of the 'bounding line.'[198] Discussing this same lecture on James Clarence Mangan, in which Joyce appears to make passing reference to Blake as 'most enlightened of western poets', Frances Boldereff writes that Joyce dislikes Mangan's 'preoccupation with Irish history', adding that: 'Joyce's attitude towards history was that of William Blake – the events it recorded had little of reality in them and so by and large were

[196] Joyce, 'James Clarence Mangan', in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, p. 74.
[197] Ibid, p.75.
[198] Gregg A. Hecimovich, "'With Pale Blake I Write Tintingface': The Bounding Line of James Joyce's Aesthetic" *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 36 No. 4, (1999), 889–904. Cf. In 1912, for a lecture at the University of Trieste, Joyce describes Blake's 'pure, clean line' that 'creates the figure on the background of the uncreated void'; reprinted in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, p. 221. On Joyce and Blake see also Robert F.Gleckner, 'Joyce's Blake: Paths of Influence,' in *Blake and the Moderns*, pp. 135-63; Hazard Adams, 'Blake and Joyce' *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.35/36 No. 1 (Summer-Fall, 1998), 683-693.

unworthy the notice of a poet.' [199] This potentially explains why Joyce thinks of Blake as 'enlightened': Blake helps turn his attention to what is the worthy 'notice of a poet.'

Joyce's critical essays on the Romantic poets and on Blake are also unusual. On the one hand, he is part of a lineage with Arnold in questioning the maturity of the Romantics, but he is also heavily influenced by Pater. As Perry Meisel explains, there is a tension in modernism between the influential examples of Pater and Arnold in the nineteenth century. Meisel points out that Arnold believes in 'a realm of universal absolutes well beyond the contingencies of time and history', whereas Pater shows less anxiety about 'belatedness' (the fear of all great artistic and cultural interventions having already happened).[200] When Arnold rejects the 'prematureness' of Romanticism, it is precisely its attention to 'contingencies of time and history' that he disparages. He believes the Romantic poets neglect 'universal absolutes.'

Leonard and Virginia Woolf chose not to publish Joyce's *Ulysses* at the Hogarth Press, finding it too much work to typeset and publish such a lengthy, complicated novel. In 'How it Strikes a Contemporary', Woolf calls *Ulysses* a 'memorable catastrophe', a text 'immense in daring, terrific in disaster.' (E IV 237) However, Woolf always takes Joyce's fiction very seriously. In 'Modern Fiction' (1925), for example, Woolf calls Joyce the 'most notable' of contemporary modernist novelists, breaking with the Victorians because Joyce challenges the idea that 'life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than what is commonly thought small.' (E IV 161).[201] Here Woolf is also exploring Joyce for what matters to her own aesthetic project.

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[199] Frances Boldereff, *Reading "Finnegan's Wake"* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959), p. 59.
[200] Perry Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p.6.
[201] 'Modern Novels', *TLS*, (April 10 1919). Woolf revised this essay for *The Common Reader: First Series* (1925).

Woolf also opposes the 'materialists' who remain attached to dated Victorian realism, such as Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy, commenting that Joyce is unlike the 'materialists' since he is 'spiritual': 'he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of the innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain.' (E IV 161). Woolf sees this 'innermost flame' of consciousness requiring a reconceptualization of 'life': 'Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.' (E IV 160). She measures Joyce according to the standards of Pater's 'gem-like flame', identifying an 'innermost flame' in his novels. She develops her own term 'luminous halo' which she then sees as an aesthetic standard, especially for the novelistic representation of reality. Woolf's interest in developing her own aesthetic terminology is also Blakean. For Blake, the 'bounding line' is the standard of an artist's signature aesthetic style, for Pater it is the 'gem-like flame', and for Woolf, it is the 'luminous halo.'

3.2. Roger Fry

Not much later, in 1904, Woolf's friend the art critic and painter, Roger Fry published an art historical article on Blake in the Burlington magazine.[202] In this 1904 article, Fry inevitably develops his student notes form 1886. Though Woolf does not meet Fry until 1910, after the post-impressionist exhibition in 1910, it might have interested her retrospectively to learn that Fry originally wrote this article on Blake in 1904, the same year she makes her drawings after Blake. Fry's 1904 essay was reprinted in 1920 in a collection of his articles, *Vision and Design*, which Leonard and Virginia Woolf owned. [203] Woolf reviews *Vision and Design* in 1921, for the feminist journal *Woman's Leader*, praising Fry's writing as 'the most important art criticism of our time', firstly because it promises a 'system of aesthetics' based on

[202] Roger Fry, 'Three Pictures in Tempera', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoiseurs* Vol. 4 No. 12 (Mar, 1904) 204-207+210-211.
[203] Roger Fry, *Vision and Design*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920)

creating in the reader a 'stream of pleasure.' (E VI 388-89). Secondly because Fry offers us all an education in 'how far it is relevant to compare literature with painting.' Fry stands out therefore as one of Woolf's likely model inspirations when she thinks about Blake and 'seeing & writing' in 1940. In 1940, Fry is also on her mind because she completes *Roger Fry A Biography* (1940). She is clearly immersed in Fry's writing, no doubt aware of Fry's interest in Blake.

Woolf's review of *Vision and Design* also expresses excitement in Fry's ability, 'by writing, talking, and sometimes pointing a finger', to place 'a light behind the canvas which has burnt ever since.' In addition to Pater, who is one of Woolf's points of inspiration, when comparing Blake to Sickert, Fry is also important for that essay on Sickert because his writing is an excellent example for describing images using words. Woolf's Sickert essay is an exercise in the critical rhetoric – writing that describes painting – in which Fry excels. While assessing Fry's 1904 essay on Blake, our attention needs therefore to be on what Fry says about Blake and the aesthetics of 'seeing & writing.'

Fry aims to be more objective about Blake than modernists like Yeats or Joyce. He is not interested in assessing Blake's art to develop his own. He writes on Blake as an art historian and art critic. His point of departure in his 1904 essay is the lack of admiring 'attention' given to Blake's 'finished pictures' in contrast to his 'wash-drawings, his wood-cuts, or his engravings.'[204] Yet while Fry might assume more objectivity than Yeats or Joyce, he identifies in Blake 'unfortunate caprices' comparable to what Joyce calls 'insensible figures', 'caprices' that, however, Fry attributes to 'the false Romantic taste of his day' imposing itself on Blake's 'original and independent' artistic 'genius.'[205] Unlike Arnold in the Victorian period, who thinks the Romantics turn against their own time, Fry considers Blake's

[204] Fry, *Vision and Design*, p. 140.
[205] Ibid, p. 140.

ambitions a function of his eighteenth-century context, though this may apply more to Blake's art than his poetry.

Yet, contradictory as it seems, Fry also shares Yeats's view that the eighteenth century did not and could not inspire Blake. He calls the eighteenth century 'vapidly polite', especially the intellectual and artistic 'circles' that dominate 'eighteenth-century London', and he sees Blake as an 'inexplicable phenomenon' within this context.[206] Fry sees Blake escaping by making himself a fundamentally a biblical poet, immersed in the 'Hebrew and Chaldaean poetry' of the 'Old Testament especially', but adds the caveat that Blake allows 'what was given to his internal vision' to become 'incomparably more definite, more precisely and more clearly articulated, than anything presented to his senses.'[207] He thinks Blake 'deals directly with these spiritual sensations, bringing in from external nature the least possible content which will enable him to create visible forms at all.'[208] What is at stake for Fry, as for Emerson and Woolf, is the idea that Blake hones his art form by turning away from 'external nature.' In slight disagreement with Fry on Blake and the Bible, E.P. Thompson rightly argues Blake draws on 'modern' texts as well as the myths and stories of ancient biblical texts, meaning he is a 'syncretic polymath', erudite in various 'positions and traditions.' [209]

Furthermore, like Emerson, Fry also anticipates Woolf's interest in Blake's assertion that 'Natural Objects' are deadening to the artistic 'imagination.' Yet Fry also brings nuance to this view by claiming that, for all his 'genius', Blake 'could not transcend the bounds' of his 'pictorial language': 'even he was forced to take something of external nature with him into his visionary world, and his wildest inventions are but recombinations and distorted

[206] Fry, *Vision and Design*, p.176.
[207] Ibid, pp.140-141.
[208] Ibid, 141.
[209] E.P. Thompson, *Witness against the beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.xvi.

memories of the actual objects of sense.' [210] Fry conceptualises Blake's 'visionary world' as a translation of 'the actual objects of sense.' Though he thinks Blake is excessive in his pursuit of the visionary, sometimes denying the reality of 'anything presented to his senses', Fry shares Woolf's excitement in Blake's visionary work. [211] Implicit in Fry's essay, there is also an acceptance of Blake as a dissenting radical, a figure of 'Mental fight', particularly when Fry contrasts him to the 'vapidly polite' eighteenth century.

Moreover, Fry states that Titian and Michelangelo help Blake to overcome a degree of primitivism in his work, because their 'art enabled him to attain a more unquestionable achievement.' Like Pater, Fry is likely part of Woolf's reading about the connection between Blake and Michelangelo. Even more importantly, Fry is a critical ally of Woolf because he thinks Blake is of more than mere historical interest in eighteenth-century art and poetry:

> Blake's art indeed is a test case for our theories of aesthetics. It boldly makes the plea for art that it is a language for conveying impassioned thought and feeling, which takes up the objects of sense as a means to this end, owing them no allegiance and accepting from them only the service they can render for this purpose.[212]

When trying to explain why Blake matters to the twentieth century, Fry foregrounds 'thought and feeling' as the inalienable quality pursued by Blake's translations of 'the objects of sense', which, furthermore, aids Blake in turning away from objects in nature, 'owing them no allegiance', besides what they offer him for his artistic practice. Blake's reinvention of 'objects of sense' constitutes a break with classical mimesis. As Wolfgang Iser writes, Blake interests Pater because he questions the 'old Aristotelian function of art as mimesis.'[213] Both Woolf's and Fry's interest in Blake is in this sense continuous with Pater. Woolf and Fry assert Blake seeks alternative modes of representing reality and they both categorise Blake as a visionary rather than a realist. Though he does not want to use Blake to develop his own art,

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[210] Fry, *Vision and Design*, p. 177
[211] Ibid, p.177.
[212] Ibid, p. 179.
[213] Wolfgang Iser, *Walter Pater: the Aesthetic Moment* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960), p. 6

he is inspired by what Blake can teach the modern aesthetic theorist. Though Fry only implicitly makes a statement about 'seeing & writing', we know Woolf believes the relation of the visual and verbal to be central to Fry's critical achievements.

3.3. Lytton Strachey

In 1905, in his introduction to *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake*, Walter Raleigh claims there is 'no part' of Blake's work, 'no casual recorded saying, or scribbled note on the margin of the books he read, which is not of a piece with all the rest':

> An absolute unity of character and purpose runs through all. Put him to the test and he will re-word the matter, which madness would gambol from. Those who have read his work with the will and the power to learn, are ready to acknowledge him for what he claimed to be, a thinker and poet and seer.[214]

Unlike the Bloomsbury group, Raleigh wants, but also struggles, to define what is 'absolute' about Blake's visionary work. Raleigh's term 'absolute unity' is worth comparing to Laurence Binyon who says Blake has 'singular integrity.' Blake scholars in the early twentieth century often use this hyperbolic language. In general, it is fair to say, early twenty-first-century Blake scholars on the other hand avoid repeating Raleigh's and Binyon's mistake. Saree Makdisi, for example, describes Blake as 'modular', meaning that his lines and ideas can be separated from one another to be interpreted more easily.[215] This is the precise opposite of the 'absolute unity' Raleigh imagines. By contrast, Woolf avoids making grand general claims about Blake, because she is interested in Blake's statements as 'modular' in character, meaning they stand alone: they can be interpreted separately from Blake's *oeuvre*.

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[214] *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake*, John Sampson (ed.), Walter Raleigh (intro.), (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), p. vii.
[215] Saree Makdisi *Reading William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 48

In 1906, Lytton Strachey reviews the Blake volume that Raleigh is introducing above, as well as one other new edition of Blake. [216] A close friend of Woolf's, Strachey is generally best known in modernist studies for his iconoclastic biographies in *Eminent Victorians* (1918). Woolf owned one of the editions reviewed by Strachey, *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake,* listed in my second appendix. Strachey's review is reprinted in his 1922 essay collection, *Books and Characters, French and English* (1922).[217] A copy of this essay collection was also present in Leonard and Virginia Woolf's library. As in the discussion of Fry above, the task is to assess Strachey's view of Blake with reference to the key terms of this thesis, 'seeing & writing' and 'Mental fight.'

Strachey undoubtedly sees Blake as a radical, avant-garde poet and artist. He is impressed that Blake 'allowed himself to be trammelled neither by prosody nor by grammar' which gives Blake the 'extraordinary audacity' of pursuing 'the mysterious dictates of his own strange and intimate conception of the beautiful and the just.'[218] Here we see a fraught recurrence of the idealisation of Blake that Fry warns against in 1886. Strachey uses terms that make Blake's radicalism vague such as 'the beautiful and the just', whereas 'Mental fight' shows Woolf has a better understanding of Blake. She understands his ideas are often accessible and worth promoting for the common good. Moreover, Strachey brings his own, unusual vocabulary to bear on Blake, while Woolf uses Blake's language, thus describing Blake on his own terms.

In 'To the Public', an illuminated plate prefacing his narrative poem *Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804), Blake describes the 'blank verse used by Milton and

[216] Lytton Strachey 'The poetry of Blake' *Independent Review*, IX (1906), 215-226. A review of *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake* and *The Poetical Works of William Blake*: *A New and Verbatim Text* John Sampson (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905). Though Strachey praises these editions, they contain errors and imperfections. Neither volume is a match for the Keynes and Erdman editions of Blake.
[217] Lytton, Strachey *Books and Characters, French and English* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1922).
[218] Strachey *Books and Characters,* p. 222

Shakespeare' as equally 'awkward', a form of 'bondage as rhyme itself' (CPPWB J 146). He explains therefore that he ensures 'variety in every line' of his poem, 'both of cadences & number of syllables' to achieve an ambitious effect:

> Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place: the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts – the mild & gentle, for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic, for inferior parts: all are necessary to each other. Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race! Nations are Destroy'd, or Flourish, in proportion as Their Poetry Painting and Music, are Destroy'd or Flourish! The Primeval State of Man, was Wisdom, Art, and Science (CPPWB J 146).

This indicates the terms on which Blake sees his poetic grammar as a break with conventional rules. Though Strachey is right, Blake is against most convention, seeing it as 'bondage', nonetheless Blake claims to have carefully devised a metrical scheme that corresponds rigorously to feeling: 'mild & gentle' meters juxtaposed with 'terrific' passages of poetry. Though Blake foregrounds meter, rather than the grammar and syntax of interest to Strachey, meter necessarily affects grammar and syntax. Blake also demonstrates alternation in linguistic feeling above, using capitalised relief-etched mirror writing, for the ideas he feels most strongly to be true.

Furthermore, in contrast to Woolf, Strachey develops a quasi-religious view of Blake's 'imagination' which he sees as Blake's primary 'allegiance': 'His attitude towards reason was the attitude of the mystic; and it involved an inevitable dilemma.'[219] Though it is a simplification to say Blake's interest in 'imagination' made him turn away from Enlightenment 'reason', Strachey views on the matter are clear. He thinks Blake's mysticism is problematic because it shows 'lack of humanity.'[220] Strachey identifies Blake's mysticism with a 'dilemma' because, he argues, Blake wants to find a 'means of approaching the

[219] Ibid, p.229
[220] Ibid, p. 229.

truth.'[221] Strachey thinks failing to live up to a grand, essentialist notion of 'truth' demonstrates a 'lack of humanity.'

Though Blake is often, especially as one of the most celebrated British artists, associated with the term mystic, the Blake scholar Northrop Frye may have been the first to complicate this view, writing in 1947:

> The usual label attached to Blake's poetry is "mystical", which is a word he never uses. Yet "mysticism" […] means a certain kind of religious technique difficult to reconcile with anyone's poetry. It is a form of spiritual communion with God which is by its nature incommunicable to anyone else, and which soars beyond faith into direct apprehension. [222]

Frye thinks 'mysticism' and 'mystical' are the prerogative of those practicing 'religious technique', whether a saint or cleric interceding on behalf of a religious community, or an individual. He thinks Blake only sees these forms of 'spiritual communion' as an experience useful for 'the end of producing his poem.' Though twenty first-century responses to Virginia Woolf seldom draw on the idea of mysticism and the mystical tradition, there was a period in Woolf studies in which this was considered appropriate by many critics for discussing her writing. [223]

However, this general condition in twenty-first century responses to Woolf is a sign of a gradual shift in Woolf studies, whereby mysticism and the mystical tradition came to be considered a problematic turning of attention away from Woolf's interest in 'the real world.'[224] An early indication of this anxiety can be seen in 1987 when Jane Marcus admits feeling an anxiety about 'the subject of Woolf's mysticism' because 'acknowledging her as a

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[221] Ibid, p. 229.
[222] Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry; A Study of William Blake*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 7.
[223] Especially influential was Madeline Moore, *The Short Season Between Two Silences*: *The Mystical and the Political in the Novels of Virginia Woolf*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984). On Woolf and religion, see Jane De Gay, Virginia Woolf and Christian Culture (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).
[224] See Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkely Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).

visionary was a trap that would allow her to be dismissed as another female crank, irrational and eccentric.'[225] Marcus prefers to think of Woolf as 'anti-capitalist' and 'anti-imperialist', but when Woolf's novels, such as the main example Marcus gives, *The Waves* (1931), appear intensely 'visionary' they also remain 'anti-capitalist' and 'anti-imperialist.'

Though Strachey finds Blake's notional 'mysticism' to be a problem, he also concludes Blake is a major figure in a 'hierarchy' that separates the most 'inspired' artists and poets from all others. [226] His ambivalence about Blake is in keeping with Bloomsbury. Finally, Strachey shares Woolf and Fry's interest in Blake's representation of nature and 'Natural Objects.' He argues that Blake dislikes the 'exaltation of Nature', manifest in 'the pantheism of Wordsworth and the paganism of Keats.'[227] Simply put, Strachey is right that Blake thinks Wordsworth and Keats attach all too much significance to the natural world. As Strachey writes, Blake sees nature, in so far as it can be perceived through the postlapsarian 'sensible world' as 'impregnated with vileness.'[228] When, in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf writes about the differences between Blake, Wordsworth, and K eats, she is refining Strachey's exaggerated view of Blake.

3.4. T.E. Hulme

In 1911, the modernist poet T.E. Hulme (1883-1917) makes polemical claims in his lecture 'Romanticism and Classicism' (1911). Woolf's diaries and letters contain no reference to Hulme, but he influences thinking about modern poetry, a subject of clear interest to Woolf. Although Hulme does not mention Blake explicitly, not unlike Arnold's statement against the Romantics in 1865, Hulme's strong views affect general perceptions of Romanticism and therefore, perceptions of Blake. It was posthumously published in a selection of Hulme's

[225] Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, p. 132.
[226] Strachey, *Books and Characters*, p. 224.
[227] Ibid, p. 224.
[228] Ibid, p. 224.

writing edited by Herbert Read in 1924.[229] Hulme asserts that 'after a hundred years of Romanticism, we are in for a classical revival, and that the particular weapon of this new classical spirit, when it works in verse, will be fancy.'[230] Inevitably Hulme's characterisation of the nineteenth century as entirely Romantic seems problematic. Clement Greenberg, for example, offers a very different perspective, arguing that by 1848, Romanticism had already 'exhausted itself' partly because Romanticism and the avant-garde are intimately linked to the rise and fall of the bourgeoisie.[231]

Hulme politicises the distinction between Romanticism and Classicism, stating that these are 'political catchwords.'[232] He supports the right-wing organisation *L'Action Française,* founded in 1899, which sought to revert to the state of French monarchy before the French revolution.[233] He sees Romanticism as left wing, and Classicism as progressively right wing. In his engraving *The Laocoön* (c. 1826-27), Blake rages against empire and classicism: 'Who first spoil & then destroy Imaginative Art For their Glory is War and Dominion/Empire against Art/See Virgils Eneid. Lib. VI. V848' (CPPWB Lö 274). In Chapter Four, Section Two, I return to Blake's views on Virgil's Aeneid as the poem that shows Rome to be the original imperialist state. I also discuss *The Laocoön* in Chapter Seven, in the section entitled 'Woolf and Blake on Hellenism.'

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[229] T.E. Hulme *Speculations*, Herbert Read (ed.) (Place of publication not identified: Ams Press, 1924). See also: Karen Csengeri, (ed.), *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

[230]Hulme, *Speculations* p. 113.

[231] Clement Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoön', *Partisan Review*, (July-August, 1940); reprinted in *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record,* David Shapiro and Cécile Shapiro (eds), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.65. Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), *Laokoön, oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie,* (Halle Otto Hendel, 1766). First translated by William Ross in 1836 as *Laocoon; or the limits of poetry and painting,* (London: Ridgway & Sons, 1836). Leonard and Virginia Woolf owned a study of poetry by James Russel Lowe, *The English Poets* (London: Scott, 1888) that included a chapter on Lessing: pp.261-310.

[232] Hulme, *Speculations* p. 113.

[233] On Hulme's political relation to this group see Henry Mead, *T.E. Hulme and the ideological politics of early modernism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.107. On Hulme and modernism see a collection of essays edited by Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek, *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

Moreover, when Hulme insists on a 'classical revival', his politics are dangerously close to those Blake considers detrimental to art. Hulme's 'classical revival' also insists on a poetics that is implicitly questioned by modernists like Woolf, Strachey, and Fry, when they discuss Blake. Hulme's term 'fancy' is Coleridgean. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge concludes 'fancy' and 'imagination' are 'two distinct and widely different faculties', contrary to the 'general belief' that they are 'two names with one meaning, or at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power.'[234] As early as 1841, the term is linked to Blake, when W.C. Dendy writes: 'Blake was a visionary, and thought his fancies real – he was mad. Shakespeare was a philosopher, and knew all his fancy was but imagination, however real might be the facts that he wrought from.'[235] Clearly, despite Hulme's view, the 'fancy' is also to be associated with Blakean Romanticism, as well as Classicism. Moreover, Coleridge sees 'fancy' as a means of gathering material for poetry, whereas the 'imagination' is of a 'higher degree' because it transforms that material for greater sublime effect. In 2006, Jeffrey Robinson demonstrated that Romantic critics have often marginalised the category of the 'fancy', following Coleridge's arguments at the expense of a strong poetic mode. [236] In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', when Woolf praises Blake's 'imagination' we ought to understand that, as a critic immersed in Coleridge, she implicitly distances him from the 'fancy', identifying him with the form Coleridge respects.

Hulme's identification of Classicism with the 'fancy' is of course only one among many means of understanding differences between the Romantic and Classic. Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869) and Stendhal (1783-1842) both claimed classical texts are simply

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[234] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works Volume 7*: *Biographia Literaria* (1817), James Engell and W. Jackson Bater, (eds.), (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p.82.
[235] From a 'fictitious dialogue' between Astrophel and Evelyn in W.C. Dendy, *The Philosophy of Mystery*, (1841), p. 90; reprinted in *William Blake: The Critical Heritage*, p. 40
[236] See Jeffrey Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry: the fancy in British Romanticism*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006). For a contrary argument about how a poet must overcome the immaturity of the fancy see Helen Vendler, *Coming of Age as a Poet*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

those deemed old-fashioned and not appealing to the youngest generation at any one time.[237] Leonard and Virginia Woolf had Sainte-Beuve's writing in their library.[238] More importantly, we need to include Blake's definition. In the 'Proverbs of Hell', a fragmentary series of reflections forming part of the relief etching *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1795), he has a formula for the difference between the Romantic and Classic poetic styles: 'The cistern contains: the fountain overflows.' (CPPWB MHH 36). Blake identifies the Romantic fountain with creative spontaneity and energy and the classical cistern with restraint and control. Blake's 'bounding line' corresponds to this aesthetic contrast between cistern and fountains. It both 'contains' and 'overflows.'

However, the image of the fountain is also classical. As Michael Ferber notes, in ancient, 'classical literature, fountains and springs', often proved 'sacred to the Muses' as 'sources of poetic inspiration.'[239] In *Appreciations*, Pater writes that Romantic and Classic have too often been 'abused', understood either 'vaguely' or 'absolutely', but must be understood as 'real tendencies in the history of art and literature.'[240] Blake's images of fountain and cistern express these 'tendencies' in aesthetics, both of which a single artist or single period may explore. [241] Woolf's definition of these terms is discussed below in the sixth section of this chapter that expands on her critical disagreements with Walter Raleigh.

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[237] See Sainte-Beuve's comment that classics are those ''déja consacré dans l'admiration' in *Causeries du Lundi Troisième Édition* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1852), p.38, and Stendhal 'Chapitre III', *Racine et Shakespeare*, (Paris: Larousse, 1936), p. 33

[238] Printed as part of a series essays entitled 'Causeries Du Lundi' or 'Monday Chats', originally in Paris newspapers, between 1849 and 1869, the essays were collected in thirteen volumes *Causeries Du Lundi* (1851-62), and *Nouveaux lundis* (1863-70). See 'Causeries du Lundi: essays by Sainte Beuve', Encyclopaedia Britannica, [accessed online 18th August, 2020]

[239] Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 80.

[240]Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 241.

[241] On the semantic history of these terms see also René Wellek, 'The Concept of "Romanticism", *Comparative Literature,* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Winter 1949), pp.1-23; Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of ideas', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* Vol. 2 No. 3 (Jun, 1941), pp. 257-278; Marshall Brown, 'Romanticism and Enlightenment', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism,* Stuart Curran (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); M.H. Abrams, 'English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age' in *Romanticism: Points of View*, Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (ed.), (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970); Aidan Day, *Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 2019).

3.5. Blake and British Art

Though Hulme's arguments concern poetry especially, the 'fancy' being a term associated with Romantic poetry, his stark contrast between the Romantic and the Classical applies also to the visual arts. In early twentieth-century debates about Blake in the visual arts, an event highly stimulating of debate is the re-arrangement of the collection on show at the National Gallery of British Art. In October 1913, in the liberal newspaper, *The Nation & Athenaeum,* an anonymous article entitled 'The Artist of the Soul', describes the new display of the artworks in the collection as a 'monument to William Blake.' [242] Firm admiration is expressed for the placing of the 'finest' of Blake's work amongst 'average British art' since here Blake's 'powers' are 'like a bomb, blowing most of the Gallery into smithereens.'

In 1913, S.P. Kerr also writes a letter of correction to the 8 November edition of *Nation & Athenaeum,* stating that October's article praising Blake's painting is mistaken because however much Blake might be 'a great mystic and a great man', his paintings are 'everything art should not be': 'They are hideous; they are repellent; they are, above all, not sane.' [243] Increasingly, in the early twentieth century, Blake's work, is passing from private collections into public museums.[244] Blake's increasing availability to the public results in such hostile, polemical response, as hostile and polemical as Hulme's politicised distinction between the Romantic and Classic standards.

In the 22 November 1913 edition of *The Nation & Athenaeum,* Roger Fry enters the debate sparked about Blake, expressing admiration for S.P. Kerr's 'outspoken criticism' for drawing attention to a central problem for the early twentieth-century art historian and aesthetic

[242] 'The Artist of the Soul', *The Nation,* Vol. 14 No. 4 (25 October, 1913), 169-70.
[243] S.P. Kerr, 'The Pictures of William Blake, to the editor', *The Nation,* Vol. 14 No. 6 (8 November 1913), (256).
[244] On historical shifts in Blake's reception see Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker, *Radical Blake: Influence and Afterlife from 1827* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002

theorist: 'We are almost forced to choose between Blake and the rest of British Art.'[245] While recognising that Blake is divisive, an artist to be praised unequivocally or decisively rejected, Fry also expresses some scepticism that we need to 'choose between Blake and the rest of British art.' Colin Trodd claims Bloomsbury's 'critical supremacy' undermines Blake, making him seem an 'untutored outcast from the polite world of ratiocinative art.'[246] Roger Fry's statements on Blake make it clear that Blake and Bloomsbury are not enemies of one another.

3.6. Walter Raleigh

Yet in addition to these polemical statements about Blake, about the Romantic and the Classic as aesthetic standards, Woolf is also reading responses to Blake that lack this polemical character. In my first chapter, I discuss Woolf's lack of excitement when reading Raleigh's private thoughts on Blake. In 1917, at the start of the year, several months before she writes 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf writes 'Romance', a review for the *TLS* of Raleigh's book *Romance: Two Lectures* (1916). Though Woolf does not explicitly address Blake, it is interesting that Raleigh makes Blake central to the Romantic period when he proposes Blake's *Poetical Sketches* as the inaugural text of 'one of the most crowded epochs of our national literature': 'Between these two dates a great company of English writers produced a literature of immense bulk, and of almost endless diversity of character.'[247]This shows us a perspective on Blake in literary and political history to which her attention is drawn. Like 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', her essay 'Romance' is likely one object in the array of *TLS* essays and notes Woolf returns to in 1940.

[245] Roger Fry, 'Blake and British Art: to the editor', *The Nation*, (22 November) 1913, 14: 8, (359).
[246] Colin Trodd, *Visions of Blake: William Blake in the Art World 1830-1930* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p.8.
[247] Walter Raleigh, *Romance: Two Lectures*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916), p. 1.

Furthermore, Woolf finds it stimulating in 'Romance' to reflect on the differences between the Romantic and Classic, and the nature of poetic perception and inspiration. She writes that to 'say that a poem is Romantic', requires us to admit 'up to a point there is nothing more real than the effect of things upon one's mind.' (E II 75) Though Woolf is exaggerating, her thoughts here are in dialogue with Blake's statement on the deadening effect of 'Natural Objects.' In both 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' and Romance', Woolf sees Romantic poetry breaking with mimetic principles. The Romantic poet, she writes, worries more about how 'the thing' affects the 'mind than of the thing itself.' (E II 75). In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf presupposes that Blake is often more interested in 'the effect of the thing' on his mind, than he is in 'the thing itself.'

In her assessment of Raleigh's statements on the distinction between the Romantic and the Classic, Woolf explains the Renaissance fascination with 'Greek and Latin' is 'consummated not in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, but in the eighteenth; thus the Romantic revival was a reaction against the Renaissance.' (E II 74). Woolf views the eighteenth-century context in which Blake lives and works dominated by Romantic aesthetic standards. What is left unstated by Woolf's essays on Raleigh is that his criticism is based on chauvinistic standards. He has much in common with Arthur Quiller-Couch's right wing views of the literary canon. Though Quiller-Couch is right in 1900 to include Blake in his anthology, he possessed highly problematic views on poetry and class. In *On the Art of Writing* (1916), he denies that 'poetical genius' exists 'equally in poor and rich', claiming that all nineteenth-century poets were 'university men.'[248] He fails to take the opportunity to explore Blake as an exception.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf cites and rebukes Quiller-Couch's sexist view of university education and poetry (AROO 124). Winifred Holtby's discussion of Woolf poetry and class,

[248] Arthur Quiller-Couch, *On the Art of Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916), p.46. Based on lectures Couch gave at the University of Cambridge between 1913 and 1914.

which I outlined in Chapter One when discussing critics who unite Woolf and Blake prior to Gillespie, is formulated partly in reaction to Woolf's engagement with Quiller-Couch. Holtby accidentally attributes Quiller-Couch's views to Woolf. Both *On the Art of Writing* and *A Room of One's Own*, are conceived first as lectures at the University of Cambridge, but Quiller-Couch addresses a male-only college, and Woolf a women-only college. When she questions Quiller-Couch's views, Woolf is explicitly drawing attention to the misogyny of universities in the early twentieth century. She finds that Blake is a powerful critic who readily opposes institutions in general, a point I expand on in Chapter Four, through Woolf's and Blake's 'Mental fight.'

3.7. T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Hart Crane

It is T.S. Eliot and Hart Crane who make the ideas in Hulme's 1911 lecture specifically relevant to Blake. In a letter of 1919, T.S. Eliot wonders whether T.E. Hulme is not in fact 'a really great poet' adding that: 'I can't think of anything as good as two of his poems since Blake.'[249] T.S. Eliot's essay on Blake, printed in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920), represents an explicit refusal to allow Blake to be part of the canon, based as I suggest above on the Arnoldian view that Romanticism is immature.[250] In a letter from 12 June 1922, the American modernist poet Hart Crane identifies allusions to 'Blake, and a dozen others' in Eliot's collection of poems *Prufrock* (1917).[251] One year later, in 1923, in another letter Crane contrasts Eliot's impressive 'erudition and technique' to the poetics of 'rhythm and ecstasy' that proves as 'real and powerful' in the early twentieth century as it

[249] T.S. Eliot, *Letters Volume I:1898-1922* (London: Faber, 1988), p.416
[250] T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, (London: Methuen, 1920). See also: T.S. Eliot, 'The Naked Man', *The Athenaeum*, (13 Feb 1920), 208-09. This piece was a review of Charles Gardner's *William Blake the Man* (1919). Eliot's essay on Blake in *The Sacred Wood* is a rewrite of that review.
[251]This letter was addressed to the poet Allen Tate: Hart Crane, *'O my land, my friends': the Selected Letters of Hart Crane,* Langdon Hammer and Brom Weber (eds), (New York: Four Walls, Eight windows, 1997), p.89.

was in 'the time of Blake.'[252] Both Crane and Pound are open to Blake's Romanticism, but Eliot, as we will see is on the side of Hulme's Classicism.[253]

In January 1922, T.S. Eliot shares with Ezra Pound the manuscript draft of *The Waste Land*.[254] Like Crane, Pound thinks Eliot is more Blakean than Eliot might personally allow. In his marginal corrections, next to one specific line, Pound turns Eliot's attention to Blake: 'Flowed up the hill and down King William Street, Blake'[255] When eventually published, in the section Eliot entitles 'The Burial of the Dead', he does not change this line:

> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
> Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
> To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
> With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.[256]

King William Street is very close to Bunhill fields, the burial place of Blake and other dissenters including John Bunyan (1628-1688), Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), as well the founder of the Quaker movement George Fox (1624-1691). Both Blake and Woolf are interested in the dissenters represented at Bunhill Fields. According to Michael Ferber, the

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[252] This letter was addressed to the critic Gorham Munson: Crane, *Selected Letters*, pp.111-118.
[253] On Crane and Blake see for instance: Donald Pease, 'Blake, Whitman, Crane: The Hand of Fire', in *Blake and the Moderns*; Donald Pease, 'Blake, Crane, Whitman, and Modernism: A poetics of Pure Possibility', *PMLA*, Vol. 96 No.1, (1981, Jan); 64-85; Thomas A Vogler, *Preludes to Vision: The Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats and Hart Crane* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1971). On Eliot and Blake see Leroy Searle, 'Blake, Eliot, and Williams: The Continuity of Imaginative Labour', in *Blake and the Moderns*; Seamus Perry, 'Eliot, Blake, Unpleasantness', *T.S. Eliot Studies Annual*, Vol. 2 (2019).
[254] Eliot's title on this first manuscript draft was 'He do the police in different voices.'
[255] Valerie Eliot, (ed.) *The Waste Land: A facsimile & transcript of the original drafts including the annotations of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), p.9. On the collaborative aspect to *The Waste Land*, see Jewel Spears Brooker, 'Dialectical Collaboration: Editing *The Waste Land*', in *The Cambridge Companion to The Waste Land* Gabrielle McIntire (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[256] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* Valerie Eliot (ed.) (London: Faber, 1962), p.62

Christian imagery of the Jerusalem hymn is largely indebted to John Bunyan.[257] In 1824 Blake makes watercolour illustrations to Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1687).[258] Woolf's aunt Caroline Emelia Stephen (Leslie Stephen's sister), who wrote *Quaker Strongholds* (1890), will have informed her about George Fox and Quaker dissent. Rather than specific sites though, Pound might think there is something Blakean and Romantic in Eliot's treatment of alienated citizens in London. He might be suggesting Eliot consult Blake's poetry about London.

Woolf, moreover, knows Eliot's poetry and criticism intimately. They were good friends and Leonard and Virginia Woolf published Eliot's poetry at the Hogarth Press, typesetting and then printing by hand Eliot's *Poems* (1919), as well as the first British edition of *The Waste Land* (1923). Reciprocating Woolf's generosity, as editor for the *New Criterion* magazine, Eliot published Woolf's essay 'On Being Ill' (1926). In the same notebook in which Woolf records Blake's words on 'Natural Objects', she also mentions Eliot's book *The Sacred Wood*.[259] She clearly takes an interest in it. In 1924, she writes to Eliot that on reading the volume she vehemently doubts all her 'leading articles in the Supplement': 'Why are you the only man who ever says anything interesting about literature? There are we all pouring out gallons of ink weekly, and never a drop of it stays.' (L III 129). Though her tone here is inscrutably bleak, Woolf is likely exaggerating the extent to which her confidence is affected, only to make Eliot strongly feel her respect for his criticism.

[257]Michael Ferber, 'Blake's "Jerusalem" as a Hymn', *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, Volume 34: Issue 3, (2000/01), 82-94 (82).
[258] G.E. Bentley notes Blake's paper for the Bunyan illustrations was 'watermarked 1824' and that 'no contemporary reference' survives making exact dating difficult: 'The Inscriptions on Blake's Designs to Pilgrim's Progress', *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, Volume 6: Issue 3, (Winter 1972-3), (68-70) On Blake's illustrations see Gerda S.Norvig, *Dark Figures in the desired country: Blake's Illustrations to the Pilgrim's Progress* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1993).
[259] Silver, *Woolf's Reading Notebooks*, p. 192.

Eliot is also often scornful of contemporary criticism. Woolf's letter of 1924 registers his extreme view that most critics have nothing to say. If Eliot's book encourages Woolf to rethink her *TLS* articles, then she likely compares Eliot's statement on Blake with her own in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque.' As Michael Kauffman suggests, Woolf's and Eliot's critical projects are incomparable because 'Eliot preached his doctrine to a limited audience', whereas 'Woolf spoke to a much wider audience, as a reader to other readers.' [260] Eliot aims to be definitive in his response to Blake, Woolf more consciously allows her formulations to be open to revision.

Eliot thinks Blake achieves 'great poetry', equal in its 'peculiarity' to 'Homer and Aeschylus and Dante and Villon', but he thinks that Blake's 'peculiar honesty' needs to be more 'profound and concealed', as it is in 'the work of Shakespeare – and also in another form in Montaigne and in Spinoza.' [261] He explicitly mentions Arnold when trying come to terms with Blake's 'eccentricity' and 'crankiness', of the kind that 'frequently affects writers outside of the Latin traditions, and which such a critic as Arnold should certainly have rebuked.'[262] Eliot exaggerates these qualities of 'eccentricity' and 'crankiness' in Blake. As David Simpson observes, the nineteenth-century view of Blake as 'loner, 'mystic' and 'visionary' created an 'image of Blake' to which modernists 'would find themselves so antagonistic'[263]

Eliot disparages Blake and Milton's pursuit of 'puritan mythology', after Northern Europe's alleged 'divorce from Rome', concluding that Blake lacks a venerable 'framework of accepted and traditional ideas.'[264] He identifies this 'framework' in Dante, whom Eliot calls

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[260] Michael Kaufman, 'Virginia Woolf's *TLS* Reviews and Eliotic Modernism', *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* Beth Carole Rosenberg, and Jeanne Dubino, (eds.) (London: MacMillan, 1997), p.137.
[261] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p.151.
[262] Ibid, p. 157.
[263] David Simpson, 'Blake and Romanticism' in *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*, Morris Eaves (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.172-73.
[264] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, pp. 157-58.

'classic', whereas Blake is a mere 'poet of genius.' More charitably, Eliot admits the issue might not have been 'Blake himself' but the limitations of his eighteenth-century 'environment.' By making this point, Eliot returns to Arnold's idea that Romantic poets remain immature. Like Arnold, Joyce, and Yeats, Eliot thinks Blake refuses to develop a language suited to his ambitions.

Furthermore, Eliot's explicit preference for Roman Catholicism and Dante's poetry shows his dismissal of Blake to be a sectarian rejection of Blake's dissenting Protestantism. As a contrasting example of a sectarian reaction against Catholicism, in a *TLS* article from 1927, celebrating Blake's centenary, Blake's 'protestant attitude of mind' is praised as what makes him 'most English.'[265] Eliot's controversial views ignore the possibility that Blake's fascination with mythologies of Arthurian legend and British history might be taken seriously.[266] It needs to be said in his defence that Blake never dislikes Dante, whose poetry he illustrated in watercolour between 1824 and 1827. [267] Though Eliot's view has considerable influence, he fails to see that Blake's marginal status often appeals to and inspires Blakeans.[268]

In *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot prints his piece on Blake alongside his famous essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919).[269] This encourages us to assess his statement on Blake according to the theoretical principles of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', an essay Eliot's critics have long been at pains to understand. In it, Eliot argues the poet must enact

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[265] 'William Blake', *TLS*, 11 August 1927, p.538
[266] See Jason Whittaker, *William Blake and the Myths of Britain* (Hampshire: Houndmills, 1999).
[267] Illustrations to Dante's Divine Comedy (C.1824-27), Ashmoleon Museum.
[268] For a repetition of Eliot's interpretation of Blake See George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, (London: Faber, 1961), p. 322. On the twentieth and twenty-first century iconic Blake see the catalogue of an exhibition at Northwestern University, from 23 September to 11 March 2017, edited by Stephen F. Eisenman, *William Blake and the Age of Aquarius* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), and Luke Walker, *William Blake in the 1960s: Counterculture and radical reception* (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2015).
[269] Part 1 of T.S. Eliot 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Egoist*, Vol. 6 No. 4 (September 1919), pp. 54-55; a second part appeared in *Egoist*, Vol. 6 No. 5 (December 1919), 72-73.

'continual self-sacrifice' and 'continual extinction of personality.'[270] He compares the poet's mind in its ideal state to a piece of 'finely filiated platinum' when 'introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.'[271]

Only in the presence of platinum can oxygen and sulphur dioxide react to become sulphur trioxide. Only in highly specific conditions can the poet's mind 'digest and transmute the passions which are its material.' [272] According to Eliot this can only take place if the poet can separate the individual that 'suffers and the mind which creates.' Eliot implicitly thinks Blake fails to achieve this plainly impossible separation. He thinks Blake's work, through its 'peculiar honesty', is too much affected by Blake's personality. Though 'honesty' is not the same as 'personality', as Maud Ellman notes, Eliot and Pound's modernist 'doctrine of impersonality' is not a stable concept, since it is used to mean 'anything from the destruction to the apotheosis of the self.'[273]

For Woolf and for Eliot, it is the critic as well as the artist who must develop impersonality. As Mark Goldman explains, Woolf's essays attempt a 'balance between reason and emotion', between the critic's individual views and 'the impersonal method.'[274] Though Eliot often uses personal views in his criticism, he shares Arnold's abstract commitment to the impersonal. In 1880 Arnold asserts that critics cannot write about contemporary poetry because objectivity will be lost when statements become too 'personal with passion.'[275] Woolf assesses Arnold's statement in 'Reviewing' (1939), printed as a Hogarth Press pamphlet, concluding that if Arnold is right, the reviewer, who only has 'one week', rather than 'many years', is different

[270]Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 53.
[271]Ibid, p. 53.
[272] Ibid, p. 54.
[273] Maud Ellman, *The Poetics of Impersonality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.ix
[274]Mark Goldman, *The Reader's Art: Virginia Woolf as Literary Critic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 4.
[275] Matthew Arnold, *The English Poets: Selections with critical introductions by various writers and a general introduction by Matthew Arnold: Volume 1 Chaucer to Donne* 4 vols Thomas Humphry Ward (ed.), (London: Macmillan, 1880), p.xlvi.

in kind from the critic (E VI 202). However, in contrast to what Arnold says, it is the ideal of impersonality that undermines objectivity. For instance, it is because Maria Di Battista wants to identify impersonality in Woolf's essays, that she thinks 'substantial personality' permeates Woolf's essays, making Woolf a critic who pursues 'biases, impurities, caprices and contradictions that adulterate her opinions.'[276] In addition to Meisel's formulation of differences between Arnold and Pater based on the mythology of modernism, the expression of critical personality also separates them. Arnold is against the critic's personality, Pater believes it can be useful.

In addition, Eliot's criticism is unfair. Blake suffers as a result of Eliot's attempt, noted by Graham Martin, to be a 'reconstituting' of 'the English poetic tradition', a highly 'ambitious feat of cultural imperialism'.[277] Perhaps it is not surprising that Blake and Milton fail to survive Eliot's rigid canonical tests. Though Eliot writes in 1930 that Pater is 'incapable of sustained reasoning', Eliot's image of the 'finely filiated platinum' closely resembles Pater's 'gem-like flame.'[278] Eliot's rejection of Blake's Romanticism must therefore to be understood as partly an attempt to correct Pater's interest in Blake. In contrast to Eliot, Woolf and Pater think Blake's displays of 'individual talent' are a gift to modern writers, that can be used to a positive end. Woolf's complex allegiance to Pater's writing on Blake, therefore, further distinguishes her critical position from Eliot.

3.8. Leonard Woolf and Geoffrey Keynes

Leonard and Virginia's dialogue on Blake is more intimate and personal than what we can presume to recover about dialogue on Blake between Woolf and Eliot, but Woolf's interest in Blake is something she shares with her husband. They likely exchange views on Blake. In

[276] Maria Di Battista, *Imagining Virginia Woolf: An Experiment in Critical Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp.92-93
[277] Graham Martin, (ed.), 'Introduction', *Eliot in Perspective*, (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), p. 22
[278] Eliot, 'Arnold and Pater' (1930), in *Selected Essays,* (London: Faber, 1932), p.402.

1925, Leonard Woolf reviews a new volume of Blake's writing, edited by Geoffrey Keynes.[279] G.E. Bentley holds Keynes responsible for inaugurating a highly rigorous phase in Blake studies.[280] Leonard rightly praises Keynes's professional scholarship and the quality of the beautifully printed book from the nonesuch press, but he also takes this opportunity to form an opinion on Blake. Leonard has substantial historical distance from Blake of almost one hundred years, but little time to write his review.

On the one hand, Leonard believes Blake's shorter poems, his 'famous lyrics' in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* have 'astonishing freshness and peculiar fascination.' On the other, he thinks that Blake's longer works become too obscure. While he likes Blake's 'logical and argumentative side', manifest in his annotations, Leonard finds that in his illuminated books, Blake combines argument with 'flights of imagination' away from 'reality.' The result, Leonard thinks, is that Blake expects his reader to unthinkingly become a 'pupil' in some sort of 'congregation', accepting Blake's 'esoteric mystical doctrine and dogma', as if it is 'eternal truth in some patent pill.'[281]

With some irony, Leonard thinks the 'exact meaning' of Blake's vitalising shorter poems is unimportant to their enjoyment, but that the burdensome interpretation expected by the longer works is oppressive. Though Blake's shorter lyrics are frequently considered more accessible than the longer prophetic works, the shorter works remain challenging. As Marjorie Levinson argues, Blake's short lyrics, when all printed together in illuminated form, often elude

[279] Leonard Woolf, 'The World of Books: William Blake', *The Nation & Athenaeum*, Vol. 37 No. 22 (29 August, 1925); (649). A review of: Geoffrey Keynes (ed.) *The Writings of William Blake* (3 Vols), Vol. 3 (London: Nonesuch, 1925).
[280] See Bentley's essay 'Blake's reputation and its interpreters' (1958), in which Bentley says this rigorous period begins in 1921 with the publication of Geoffrey Keynes (ed.) *Bibliography of William Blake* (1921).
[281] Leonard Woolf, 'The World of Books: William Blake', p. 649.

'allegorical fixity.'[282] The shorter lyrics are much better represented in Leonard and Virginia Woolf's library (see my second appendix).

The crucial point however is that Leonard considers Blake's didacticism problematic, his tendency to be a 'preacher and teacher.' When Woolf uses Blake's doctrine of 'Mental fight' she risks falling into the trap of overt, excessive didacticism. Leonard's view echoes Lytton Strachey's from 1906. Both finds Blake's apparent mysticism alienating, in conflict with reason and distanced from more important everyday concerns. Leonard Woolf and Strachey also imply that Blake is not a realist, which brings their work into dialogue with Virginia Woolf in *Walter Sickert*: *A Conversation.* Leonard is also terribly impressed that Blake avoids 'the mighty abyss of sentimentality.'[283] Unlike Eliot, Leonard seems to think Blake has control over his personality and his feeling.

In their library, of course, Leonard and Virginia shared Blake volumes. One year after Leonard's review, in 1926 Leonard and Virginia are sent a new edition of Milton's *Comus*, that includes monochrome facsimiles of Blake's watercolour illustrations.[284] Blake works on two sets of nearly identical illustrations to *Comus*, the first in 1801, the second in 1815. [285] Leonard and Virginia's edition includes a review slip, suggesting that the publisher, Ernest Benn, was aware Leonard and Virginia were regular reviewers. Though neither Leonard nor Virginia review this book, Leonard reviews another new Milton edition illustrated by Blake, praising it as follows, on 9 October, 1926: 'The Nonesuch Press pursues its distinguished path with inter alia the English poems of Milton with Blake's illustrations.'[286]

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[282] Marjorie Levinson, '"The Book of Thel"' by William Blake: A Critical Reading', *ELH*, Vol. 47 No. 2 (Summer, 1980), pp.287-303.
[283] Leonard Woolf, 'The World of Books: William Blake', p. 649.
[284] John Milton, *Comus: A Mask*. From the edition of 1645. by Darrell Figgis (ed. and pref.), William Blake (Illus.), (London: Benn, 1926).
[285] The Thomas set of Blake's illustrations of *Comus* was made in 1801 and the originals are in Huntingdon Library in San Marino, California. The Butts set was made in 1815, and the originals are in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. These paintings have been reproduced in numerous digital facsimiles.
[286] Leonard Woolf, 'The World of Books', *The Nation & Athenaeum*, Vol. 40 No. 1 (9 October 1926).

Though the exact date is not known, at some point in or after 1926, Leonard and Virginia also acquire George Macaulay Trevelyan's *History of England* (1926), a book Woolf cites in the same notebook that mentions Blake and 'seeing & writing.' (See also my third appendix) Trevelyan makes passing reference to Blake as a poet who, like 'Burns and Wordsworth' turns against 'rationalised and most academic' standards of the 'upper class', preferring 'the imagination of common folk.'[287] Trevelyan's remark allows us to further ascertain an affinity between Blake and Woolf's 'Anon.' It also shows Woolf's reading in 1940 does not only return to her *TLS* articles and notes, but to books acquired in earlier years and throughout her writing life. Trevelyan's opinion is also important as a contrast to Eliot's insistence on what is an impossibly 'rationalised and most academic' response to Blake.

3.9. E.M. Forster on visionary Blake

In 1927, in her essay, 'Is Fiction An Art?', Woolf reviews E.M. Forster's book of literary criticism, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927).[288] She does not mention Blake explicitly in this review, but, like Trevelyan's *History of England,* mentioned at the close of the last section, Forster's book needs to be recovered as part of Woolf's reading about Blake. In her assessment of the state of fiction, as represented in Forster's book, Woolf imagines novels and short stories must make for lacklustre reading:

> In poetry, in drama, words may excite and stimulate and deepen; but in fiction they must, first and foremost, hold themselves at the service of the teapot and a pug dog, and to be found wanting is to be found lacking. (E IV 462).

Here Woolf returns to her dislike of the 'materialists' in the novel, which she articulates in 'Modern Fiction' (1925). She understands Forster's view is fundamentally that the novel's responsibility is to realism, and that only other forms, poetry, and drama, perhaps music,

[287] George Macaulay Trevelyan, *History of England: Sixth Impression* (London: Longmans, 1928), p.517.
[288]E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1927); Woolf's review printed in *NYHT*, (16 October, 1927).

perhaps painting, can turn away from the bland details of 'the teapot and a pug dog.' Woolf's isolation of this insistence on realism matters because Forster uses Blake to make his case for the novel needing to be realist.

In his chapter on 'prophecy', Forster claims that novels that break with realist convention demand 'humility' from critics:

> We have indeed to lay aside the single vision which we bring to most of literature and life and have been trying to use through most our enquiry, and take up a different set of tools. Is this right? Another prophet, Blake, had no doubt that it was right.
>
> May God us keep
>
> From Single vision, & Newton's sleep!
>
> he cried, and he painted that same Newton with a pair of compasses in his hand, describing a miserable mathematical triangle and turning his back upon the gorgeous and immeasurable water-growths […] Few will agree with Blake. Fewer will agree with Blake's Newton. Most of us will be eclectics to this side or that according to our temperament. [289]

Woolf's view is that Forster also turns away, like Blake's Newton, from visionary aesthetics and experience, from 'gorgeous and immeasurable water-growths.' Though Forster laments contradictory and inconsistent 'eclecticism', there is implicit in his book, especially in his difficulty in writing about *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë, the view that most novels have elements of prophecy and of realism. Though he is reluctant, Forster accepts that most critics and novelists experience the world somewhere between the extremes of Blake's visionary generosity, and Newton's scientific myopia.

Forster was quoting above from a letter Blake writes on 22 November 1802, to his patron Thomas Butts, including a poem about landscape in Felpham, West Sussex. Excerpted from the letter, this poem was represented in Woolf's library (see my first appendix). Blake makes bold claims for his own poetic perception: 'What to others a trifle appears/ Fills me full of

[289] Forster, *Aspects*, pp.132-33.

smiles or tears/ For double the vision my Eyes do see/ And a double vision is always with me' (CPPWB L 772). He expands on this 'double vision' in the final stanza:

> Now I, a fourfold vision see
> And a fourfold vision is given to me
> Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
> And three fold in soft Beulah's night
> And twofold Always. May God us keep
> From Single Vision & Newtons sleep. (CPPWB L 722).

Blake's identification of reductive 'single vision' with 'Newton's sleep' is reinforced in one of his major colour prints, described above by Forster, the portrait of Newton unable to see his beautiful natural surroundings because he is focusing on solving a mathematical problem:

Figure 7: William Blake. *Newton* (1795). Colour print with pen and ink additions. Philadelphia Museum of Art.© *Blakearchive.org.*

Like Woolf, Forster is intrigued by Blake's visionary ideas, but also holds them at a greater distance from his own critical principles. Forster does not want to let go of 'single vision' which he finds a useful intellectual guide. Neither, however, is Forster an uninspiring and pedantic voice on Blake like Walter Raleigh. In her review of Forster's book, in a way that is slightly reminiscent of her praise for Edward Thomas's supple scholarship, Woolf is refreshed by his lack of pretention in choosing to avoids the rigid 'scholar's attitude' (E IV 457).

In addition to Woolf's interest in Forster's ideas about the visionary and the realist in the novel, we must consider Forster's statements about the visionary in Woolf's fiction. He starts developing these ideas as early as 1915. In his review of Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915), he argues Woolf renews our sense of 'vision' by showing the 'supreme choice' in theological and religious belief is no longer 'between body and soul, but between immobility and motion.'[290] Subsequently E.M. Forster writes of Woolf's short stories 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917) and *Kew Gardens* (1919), that the 'very word vision (Latin video)' applies as 'merely something that has been seen, and in this sense Mrs Woolf's two stories are visions.'[291] As early as 1919, Forster is sceptical of Blake's idea of the visionary. He does not see Woolf as a realist, but he does not want to develop a complex 'fourfold' theory of what the visionary means. Like Woolf in *Walter Sickert a Conversation*, he also separates Blake from realism.

3.10. D.H. Lawrence

Though important to Woolf's thinking, Forster is reserved when he writes about Blake. Perhaps the most passionate of Woolf's contemporary novelists on Blake, especially on Blake as a visual artist, is D.H. Lawrence. In 1929, Lawrence's paintings were exhibited in London, but the exhibition was quickly closed by police on the grounds of being indecent in its representation of naked figures. [292] Lawrentian controversy did not escape Woolf. She writes to Vita Sackville West, on 4 February 1929, that a book of D.H. Lawrence's poetry she was awaiting had been 'seized in ms by the police in the post.' (L IV 14).[293] In 'How it

[290] E.M. Foster, 'review', *Daily News and Leader,* (8 April 1915); reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, p.54
[291]E.M. Forster, 'Visions', *Daily News,* (July 31 1919); reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage*, p.68.
[292] Reported in the press see: 'D.H. Lawrence's Art seized in police raid', *The New York Times*, (6 July 1929). The paintings Lawrence exhibited are reproduced in *The Paintings of D.H. Lawrence, with essays by Harry T. Moore,* Mervyn Levy (ed.), (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964).
[293] For critical comparison of Woolf and Lawrence, see: Helen Wussow, *The Nightmare of History: The Fictions of Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence* (London: Associated University Press, 1998) and Benjamin Hagen, *The Sensuous Pedagogies of Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence* (South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2020).

Strikes a Contemporary', Woolf writes that 'Mr Lawrence, of course has moments of greatness, but hours of something very different.' (E IV 237). In 'The Leaning Tower', she mentions Lawrence as the one example, among '1914 writers', of a novelist not part of the 'middle class.' (E VI 265).

Like Blake, Lawrence also writes an essay to accompany his solo exhibition, 'Introduction to these paintings' (1929), a gesture we know from Blake's 1809 *Descriptive Catalogue*. Moreover, like Blake, Lawrence rejects painters he does not like. As Martin Myrone and David Blayney Brown write, Blake's 1809 exhibition, organised independently of commercial support, represents a 'courageous act of self-assertion.'[294] This 'self-assertion' survives in Blake's rhetoric in the catalogue, such as when he denounces English painting as 'the Seat and Protectress of bad (that is blotting and blurring) Art.' (CPPWB DC, 528). Blake's 1809 catalogue inspires Lawrence to write his own manifesto.

Lawrence is as disparaging of English painting as Blake. He writes of all painters he does not like that they 'don't exist.' [295] He finds almost all English painting 'bourgeois' but he is most excited by Blake:

> Blake is the only painter of imaginative pictures, apart from landscape, that England has produced. And unfortunately there is so little Blake, and even in that little the symbolism is often artificially imposed. Nevertheless Blake paints with real intuitional awareness and solid instinctive feeling. He dares handle the human body, even if he sometimes makes it a mere ideograph. And no other Englishman has ever dared handle it with alive imagination.[296]

Lawrence reminds us of Fry's claim in 1913 that Blake seems incompatible with 'the rest of British Art.' His praise for the 'real intuitional awareness and solid instinctive feeling' might

[294] David Blayney Brown and Martin Myrone, 'William Blake's 1809 Exhibition', *Tate Papers*, no. 14. (Autumn 2010). On Blake's solo exhibition see Troy Patenaude, '"The Glory of a Nation": Recovering William Blake's 1809 Exhibition', in *The British Art Journal*, Vol. 4 No. 1 (2003), 52–63.
[295]D.H. Lawrence, 'Introduction to these paintings', *Late Essays and Articles* James T. Boulton (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 194.
[296]Lawrence, 'Introduction to these paintings', p.194.

be the closest any of Woolf's modernist contemporaries come to calling Blake a realist. It is Lawrence's fixation on Blake's painting that makes this possible.

However, Lawrence is not admiring Blake's ability to accurately represent the body's anatomical form. He says Blake almost transforms the body into a symbolic 'ideograph.' Instead, Lawrence is committed to Blake's imaginative grasp of the body's vitality. Whereas, classical renaissance painting and sculpture follows anatomy, in Blake's work, as Tristanne J. Connolly notes: 'the shape of the body as we know it is not absolute.'[297] In addition, Lawrence's identification of Blake with energy helps us understand why in 1933, Woolf's near contemporary, F.R. Leavis wrote that what Blake and Lawrence have in common is a preference for 'impulse and spontaneity' over 'reason and convention.'[298] In other words, D.H. Lawrence is an important modernist who sees Blake's 'eccentric' work – 'eccentric' being the term Woolf uses in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' – as necessary, whereas, for example, T.S. Eliot dismisses Blake on the same grounds. He also believes that painters and writers can take inspiration from Blake. Since Woolf is interested in Blake and the relations of the visual and verbal arts, D.H. Lawrence's essay belongs to the broader context for her interest in Blake. It has been useful throughout this chapter to contextualise Woolf's opinion on Blake amongst that of her contemporaries. It shows her aim of defining what is distinctive about Blake is part of an aim shared by modernists. The contrasts that emerge bring Woolf's view into relief, especially that between the Woolfian and the Eliotic Blake.

[297] Tristanne J. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), P.4.
[298] F.R. Leavis, *For Continuity*, (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1933), p. 113. On Lawrence and Blake see also: Myra Glazer, 'Why the Sons of God Want the Daughters of Men: on William Blake and D.H. Lawrence' in *William Blake and the Moderns*; Nick Ceremella, 'Blake and Lawrence between the Relative and the Absolute', *Études Lawrenciennes* 51, (2020).

4: ‘Mental fight’ in Woolf and Blake

The previous two chapters show Blake being recognized as a modern poet-painter and they map a progression in Blake’s reception from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. While my thesis needs this context to assess Woolf’s position on Blake, her ideas on Blake are also often formed independently from Blake’s developing reception. One clear example is in the essay ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ in which Woolf cites Blake’s poetry that became well-known known in early twentieth-century Britain through the famous Jerusalem hymn. Although the previous two chapters focus on Blake as a modern artist and poet, the Jerusalem hymn, through its first performances, comes to be associated with warmongering politics. This chapter considers the Jerusalem hymn as a failure to recognize Blake as modern and radical. I examine what Woolf and Blake respectively mean by ‘Mental fight’ and discuss why Woolf wants to distance Blake’s name from the Jerusalem hymn.

4.1. Woolf’s ‘Mental fight’

This chapter’s aim requires us to develop a working definition of ‘Mental fight.’ In Chapter One, I quote Woolf’s own straightforward definition: ‘Mental fight means thinking against the current, not with it.’ (E VI 243). She sees this ‘current’, one that ‘flows fast and furious’, being manifested in the political rhetoric of 1940:

> It issues in a spate of words from the loudspeakers and the politicians. Every day they tell us that we are a free people, fighting to defend freedom. That is the current that has whirled the young airman up into the sky and keeps him circling there among the clouds (E VI 242).

This ‘spate of words’ must not be under-estimated. As Judith Allen argues, Woolf understands the need for ‘never taking our focus away from the power of words.’[299] ‘Mental fight’ is partly a form of vigilance that defies such grossly misleading political rhetoric.

[299]Judith Allen, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 117.

In the months of 1940 before the publication of 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', Woolf is considering her subject. She had been invited to write on this subject: 'what the Americans wants of me is views on peace. Well, these spring from views on war' (L VI 379).[300] On 15 May, she writes in her diary: 'This idea struck me: the army is the body: I am the brain. Thinking is my fighting' (D V 285). As well as 'Mental fight' opposing this 'current' of rhetoric that insists 'we are a free people, fighting to defend freedom', it is Woolf's personal form of 'fighting.' She understands it to be distinct from the fighting undertaken by 'the army' and by 'the body.'

This last point shows us that Woolf's 'Mental fight' is partly a deconstruction of the difference between passive thinking and active fighting. Throughout her essay, Woolf uses Blake's words to test whether military, embodied forms of 'fighting' are always more effective than forms of 'fighting' based on 'thinking.' There is a degree of hopelessness, Woolf admits, in this task. Her essay opens with 'a queer experience' of 'lying in the dark and listening to the zoom of a hornet which may at any moment sting you to death' (E VI 242). The 'sound' of the Luftwaffe above London, even though it 'interrupts cool and consecutive thinking about peace', must be seen as 'a sound – far more than prayers and anthems – that should compel one to think about peace' (E VI 242). The Jerusalem hymn, especially during the Great War and at the start of the second world war, falls into the category of 'prayers and anthems' that impede 'thinking about peace.'

Yet, Woolf adds, to make 'ideas' of peace 'effective' there must be a means 'to fire them off', but faced with thoughts of how to 'put them into action', 'the hornet in the sky rouses another hornet in the mind':

> There was one zooming in *The Times* this morning – a woman's voice saying, 'Women have not a word to say in politics.' There is no woman in the Cabinet; nor

[300] For full details of Woolf's correspondences about this article, see Clarke's notes in Volume 6 of Woolf's essays, pp. 245-248.

> in any responsible post. All the idea makers who are in a position to make ideas effective are men. That is a thought that damps thinking, and encourages irresponsibility. Why not bury the head in the pillow, plug the ears, and cease this futile activity of idea making? Because there are other tables besides officer tables and conference tables. Are we not leaving the young Englishman without a weapon that might be of value to him if we give up private thinking, tea-table thinking, because it seems useless. Are we not stressing our disability because our ability exposes us to abuse, perhaps to contempt? 'I will not cease from mental fight,' Blake wrote. Mental fight means thinking against the current, not with it. (E VI 242-43)

Woolf's words 'Women have not a word to say in politics' were taken from a speech by Lady Nancy Astor, the first woman M.P. The speech was given two months before 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid' and discusses the marginalisation of women.[301] Woolf sees pacifist thought as almost entirely the prerogative of women. She conceives of 'Mental fight', which she also calls 'private thinking, tea-table thinking', as a practice that must be sought outside of the 'current' of the political mainstream. She calls on women to cease 'making arms, or clothes or food' and practice 'tea-table thinking' instead (E VI 242).

Though Woolf focuses on the fact that most soldiers, politicians, and military generals were men, meaning that pacifism appears to be left to women, Woolf also sees pacifism through the lens of generation. In her unpublished memoir of her nephew Julian Bell, Vanessa Bell's son, killed when supporting the anti-fascists in the Spanish Civil War, Woolf claims military activism is a 'fever in the blood of the younger generation which we can't possibly understand':

> I have never known anyone of my generation have that feeling about a war. We were all C.O.'s in the Great War. And though I understand that this is a 'cause', can be called the cause of liberty & so on, still my natural reaction is to fight intellectually: if I were any use, I should write against it: I should evolve some plan for fighting English tyranny. The moment force is used, it becomes meaningless & unreal to me.[302]

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[301] Woolf quotes one of Lady Nancy Astor's speeches in parliament reported on here: 'Waste of Woman Power: Demands for Clearer Direction', *The Times*, (22 August 22, 1940).

[302] As printed in Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf a Biography: Volume 2: 1912-1941*, pp. 258-59. For a sense of how this younger Bloomsbury generation considered military activism, see David Garnett, 'War Victims Relief', *We Did Not Fight: 1914: 1918 Experiences of War Registers*, Julian Bell (ed.) (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), pp. 129-40.

Due to the serious threat of Nazi German forces invading Britain, pacifism becomes an even harder ideal to defend with strong arguments in 1940. Yet in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid', Woolf aims to draw her reader's attention to a form of 'English tyranny' which she feels is forgotten, namely the existence of fascist thinking and feeling in both the British and the German nation state. She thinks conscientious objection and pacifism had been under threat from the time of the Spanish Civil War onwards. If younger generations did increasingly turn to military activism, Woolf might feel it necessary to keep the practice of 'Mental fight' open to revision or reformulation so that it can be used by those younger generations.

In 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid', Woolf claims that 'English tyranny' persists by showing, despite what many politicians say at the time, that no British citizen involved in military action or indirectly affected can be considered free:

> We are equally prisoners tonight – the Englishmen in their planes, the Englishwomen in their beds. But if he stops to think he may be killed; and we too. So let us think for him. Let us try to drag up into consciousness that subconscious Hitlerism that holds us down. It is the desire for aggression; the desire to dominate and enslave. Even in the darkness we can see that made visible. We can see shop windows blazing; and women gazing; painted women; dressed up women; women with crimson lips and crimson fingernails. They are slaves who are trying to enslave. If we could free ourselves from slavery we should free men from tyranny. Hitlers are bred by slaves. (E VI 243).

Woolf complicates the dialectic between master and slave. She makes the point that those who dutifully follow fascist leaders are inevitably enslaved themselves. Identifying the qualities of a fascist dictator, 'the desire for aggression; the desire to dominate and enslave', Woolf wants us to see they must exist, to some degree, in most capitalist nation states, in both men and women. She therefore considers 'Mental fight' to be in opposition to patriarchal hierarchies, the hierarchical capitalist conditions that create a dictator like Hitler. As Woolf writes: 'Destroy that, and you will be free' (E VI 243).

If therefore Woolf understands 'Mental fight' as a political concept, it is worth briefly discussing critical assessments of Woolf's politics. In 2006, Jane Marcus argued 'Woolf was not an activist.'[303] In 2015, Clara Jones challenges this view, describing Woolf as an 'ambivalent activist.' [304] In contrast to Jones and Marcus, many scholars treat Woolf's politics through the pacifist ideas of the Bloomsbury group. [305] Despite the general merits of what Jones and Marcus say, 'Mental fight' is a form of activism. Moreover, Woolf's late work is often considered explicitly political.[306] Though it can be reformulated to suit different individuals and historic periods, Woolf's rhetoric in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid' makes it very clear it cannot be a term of ambivalence. When put into practice, Woolf knows 'Mental fight' must be unequivocal if it is to be effective in bringing about peace.

4.2. Woolf's and Blake's 'Mental fight'

To understand what 'Mental fight' means to Blake and to Woolf, we also need to understand the forms of mental slavery that both oppose. Woolf's image above of a 'hornet in the mind', which she also calls a 'mind hornet in the chambers of the brain', owes something to a central image in Blake's poem 'London', printed in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*: 'mind-forg'd manacles' (CPPWB SIE 27). In another of her key pacifist texts, *Three Guineas,* Woolf cautions against becoming complicit in 'intellectual slavery': 'for we are agreed that to write at the command of another what you do not want to write is to be enslaved' (TG 179).

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[303] Jane Marcus, 'Introduction to Three Guineas', *Three Guineas* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), p. xl
[304] See Clara Jones, *Virginia Woolf: Ambivalent Activist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
[305] J. Ashley Foster, 'Bloomsbury and War', in *The Handbook to the Bloomsbury Group* Derek Ryan and Stephen Ross (eds.) (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). See also J. Ashley Foster, 'Writing was her fighting: *Three Guineas* as a Pacifist Response to Total War', in *Virginia Woolf and 20th Century Women Writers*, Kathryn Stelmach Artuso (ed.) (Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2014).
[306] The most extensive study of Woolf's late political phase is Alice Wood, *The Development of Virginia Woolf's Late Cultural Criticism* (PhD De Montfort University, 2010). See also Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994). For a sense of Woolf's increasingly political thinking in her diaries, see Barbara Lounsberry, *Virginia Woolf: The War without, the war within* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018).

As I mention in Chapter One, via Julia Briggs, Woolf also uses Blakean imagery in *Three Guineas*. When Woolf describes the 'poison tree of intellectual harlotry', borrowing Blake's language, she uses the image to conclude: 'The ring once broken, the captives would be freed.' (TG 179). In both *Three Guineas* and 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid' Blake is useful to Woolf's need to address forms of mental slavery.

Woolf's argument against fascist forms of thinking in *Three Guineas* is wilfully, vehemently misunderstood at the time by Q.D. Leavis who unjustly dismisses it as 'Nazi dialect without Nazi conviction.'[307] It is fairer to say Woolf explores a thesis famously articulated by Walter Benjamin: 'There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.'[308] Moreover, Blake's 'Mental fight' and his pacifist ideas are usefully illuminated by Benjamin's thesis. 'Intellectual slavery' and 'Mind-forg'd manacles' are Woolf's and Blake's terms for the antithesis to 'Mental fight.' These terms refer to the mental slavery created by the powerful 'current' described by Woolf in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid.'

For Blake, in the poetry he prints on the 'preface' plate introducing *Milton: a poem in 2 Books*, he makes 'Mental fight' a religious concept. He uses the term 'Mental fight' in the closing stanza:

> I will not cease from Mental Fight,
> Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
> Till we have built Jerusalem,
> In Englands green & pleasant Land.
> (CPPWB M 95-96).

[307] Q.D. Leavis, 'review', *Scrutiny*, (September 1938), 203-14; reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage*, p.410

[308] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt (ed. With intro), Harry Zorn (trans.), (London: Pimlico, 1999), p.248. On Benjamin and Woolf, see Angeliki Spiropoulou, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

The Jerusalem hymn takes its name from this final stanza. Like Woolf, Blake does not make it easy to see how 'Mental fight' ought to be practiced, but he is equally unequivocal in communicating its urgency. His term 'Mental fight' also shares with Woolf's a focus on the future, but Blake's vision of the future is messianic rather than necessarily pacifist.

In the prose which appears on the same plate, Blake expands on what the term 'Mental fight' means. I point out in Chapter One that in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid', Woolf wants to return attention to Blake's original print, which means we must examine his prose as well. He writes that the work of ancient Latin and ancient Greek poets and philosophers has been mistreated:

> The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero. which all men ought to condemn: are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible. but when the New Age is at leisure to Pronounce; all will be set right: & those Great Works of the more ancient & consciously & professedly Inspired Men, will hold their proper rank, & the Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration. Shakespeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady of infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword.
>
> Rouze up O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings! For we have Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, & the University: who would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War. Painters! on you I call! Sculptors! Architects! Suffer not the fash[i]onable Fools to depress your powers by the prices they pretend to give for contemptible works or the expensive advertising boasts that they make of such works; believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; in Jesus our Lord. (CPPWB M 95)

Compare Blake's distinction between 'mental' and 'corporeal war' to Woolf's diary entry of 15 May 1940, quoted above. Blake's 'mental' form of belligerence opposes 'Hirelings in the Camp, the Court & the University', those who 'depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War.' Blake's ideal opponents to 'ignorant Hirelings' are artists, painters, sculptors and architects. Blake says to this group, do not allow 'prices' to 'depress your powers.'

Though Blake's statement about 'stolen and perverted writings' seems initially negative and hostile, he tries to appreciate these writers, Plato especially.[309] His curious view about ancient texts, both Latin and Greek, being 'stolen and perverted', is also about the potential eighteenth-century forms of patriotism these texts come to represent. As Seymour Howard writes: 'Allegiance to the New Classics in effect identified young patriots and their nationalism.'[310] When they are reinvented to encourage patriotism and nationalism, these classic texts become 'stolen and perverted.' For Blake, the younger generations are a source of potential hope for progress, but also concern since their actions are unpredictable. In 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', Woolf makes it clear that subsequent generations must share the responsibility for 'Mental fight' because, as she explains, if peace is not achieved immediately then: 'millions of bodies yet to be born – will lie in the same darkness and hear the same death rattle overhead.' (E VI 242)

Blake's prose comments about 'Mental fight' are also in dialogue with his very last illuminated relief etching. He develops his political challenge to ancient Greek and Latin texts in an intriguing, illuminated plate, printed in two parts, 'On Homer's Poetry', and 'On Virgil' (1822) There are only two known copies surviving, both printed in 1822.[311] In 'On Virgil', Blake makes a pacifist statement:

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[309] On Blake and Platonic philosophy see, John E. Brown, 'Neo-Platonism in the poetry of William Blake', *Journal of aesthetics and art criticism*, (ed.), Vol. 10. No. 1 (September, 1951), 43-52; George Mills Harper, *The Neo-Platonism of William Blake*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); Wilfred S. Dowden, 'Blake's Neo-Platonism', *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 72 No. 1, (Winter 1964), 139-141. There is one critical text in which both Woolf and Blake are used as examples of early twentieth-century platonic thinking: Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (eds*.), Platonism and the English Imagination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[310] Seymour Howard, 'Blake: Classicism, Gothicism, and Nationalism', *Colby Literary Quarterly*, Vol. 21 No. 4. (December, 1985), 165-187. (165). Also on classical sources in Blake: Morton D. Paley, 'Wonderful Originals': Blake and Ancient Sculpture,' in *Blake in His Time*, Robert N. Essick, and D. Peace, (eds.), (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978); Seymour Howard 'Blake, the Antique, Nudity, and Nakedness; A study in Idealism and Regression', *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. 3 No. 6 (1982), 117-49. Blake's sources in visual art are also outlined in: Anthony Blunt, *The Art of William Blake* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); David Bindman, *Blake as an Artist* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977).

[311] Copy B. is in the Fitzwilliam Museum; Copy F. in the Morgan Library and Museum.

> Virgil in the Eneid Book VI. Line 848, says Let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War & Dominion
>
> Rome & Greece swept art into their maw & destroyd it a warlike state never can produce Art. It will Rob & Plunder & accumulate into one place, & Translate & Copy & Buy & Sell & criticize, but not Make. (CPPWB OHV 270).

Though he does think poets can be complicit in the warmongering nation state, Blake is not necessarily attributing warmongering ideas to Virgil. He may well have understood that Virgil used his poetry to criticise the warlike Roman state. These well-chosen words, 'Let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War & Dominion', paraphrase a key speech by Anchises, father of Aeneas, at the start of the campaign to conquer Latium, and they assert Blake's view that 'a warlike state never can produce Art.'[312]

A group of painters and sculptors formed the Artist's International Association (AIA) in London in 1933 as part of the campaign against fascism. On 1 May 1937, the AIA organised a pacifist march to Hyde Park, at which they use Blake's words above on the stifling effect of a 'warlike state' on the artist. One of its members, the painter Julian Trevelyan remembers that for this protest, members of the AIA held up a 'banner' with the following 'quotation from Blake: "A warlike state cannot create."'[313] On 12 August 1940, Woolf writes to Julian Trevelyan's father, Robert Trevelyan., that she is pleased Julian was 'interested' in her book *Roger Fry: a Biography* (1940): 'Roger would have liked to attract the younger generation.' (L VI 412). Woolf certainly knows about the AIA because they commission her essay 'Why

[312] The Loeb edition gives the Latin from Book VI (lines 847-53): 'excudent alii spirantia mollius aera/ (credo equidem), vivos ducent de marmore vultus,/orabunt causas Melius, cealique meatus/describent radio et surgentia sidera dicent:/tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento/(hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem,/parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.' And in English translation: 'Others, I doubt not, shall with softer mould beat out the breathing bronze, coax from the marble features to the life, plead cases with greater eloquence and with a pointer trace heaven's motions and predict the risings of the stars: you, Roman, be sure to rule the world (be these your arts), to crown peace with justice, to spare the vanquished and to crush the proud." Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, pp.592-93.

[313] Julian Trevelyan, *Indigo Days*, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1957), p.73. On Woolf and 1930s anti-fascist movements, see David Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s', Part I. *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 3 (1997), 3-27; Part II, *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 4 (1998), 41-66.

Art To-Day Follows Politics' (1936).[314] The AIA is an international community allied to 'Mental fight.' The letters Woolf receives in response to *Three Guineas* are further evidence of Woolfian communities that participate in the practice of 'Mental fight.' [315]

Woolf's Bloomsbury comrades, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant were among the artists featured in an exhibition coinciding with the AIA congress for peace in 1937, aiming to promote 'Unity of artists, For Peace, for Democracy, for Cultural Progress.'[316] In the eighteenth century, radical circles like the AIA exist, such as the London Corresponding Society. Formed in the 1790s by Thomas Hardy (1752-1832), having 3000 members at its height, it represents a radical and subversive fraction of the eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere that Jurgen Habermas explores.[317] The AIA are also clear allies of Woolf and Bloomsbury in their socialist and left-wing progressive beliefs. Woolf's words in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid' echo the AIA's political use of Blake's pacifist rhetoric.

4.3. The Jerusalem hymn

Although the interventions of the AIA as well as Woolf, in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid', clearly show that in intellectual circles in the early twentieth century Blake was understood to be a left-wing poet and painter, his work is damagingly brought into dialogue with the right wing through the first performances of the Jerusalem hymn. The very first performance of the Jerusalem hymn took place at a for members of the propaganda organisation *Fight for Right*, at the Queen's Hall in London on 28 March 1916.

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[314] Printed in the socialist magazine, *The Daily Worker,* on 14 December.
[315]See Anna Snaith (ed.) "Three Guineas Letters," *Woolf Studies Annual* Vol. 6 (2000), 1-168.
[316] The announcement was circulated early in 1937 by AIA, see the reprint as a full page in: Lynda Morris and Robert Radford, *AIA: The Story of the Artist's International Association* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1983), p. 35.
[317]See Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society,* Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (trans.), (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). Originally published in German: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit,* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1962).
On Blake and the LCS, see the first chapter, 'Members unlimited', in E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963), p.99.

One of its founders was Francis Younghusband (1863-1942). A Victorian colonial general, Younghusband is described in the ODNB as a proponent of 'classic British imperialism, not shy of exercising brute power' who led an imperialist invasion into Tibet during which, on April 1904, seven hundred Tibetans were killed at Chumi Shengo.[318] Younghusband retrospectively explains in 1918, the *Fight for Right* group was formed with the aim of 'maintaining keenness for the war.' [319] According to Younghusband's recollection, commitment to the Great War was in decline because soldiers and civilians felt it was clear 'our homelands' would never be 'invaded.' Another member of the same group, the poet laureate, Robert Bridges asked his friend the composer Charles Hubert Parry to set Blake's poetry about 'Mental fight' to music, for members of *Fight for Right*.[320] This is how it came to be performed at the Queen's Hall on 28 March 1916. Bridges also includes Blake's poem in an anthology, present in Leonard and Virginia's library, entitled *The Spirit of Man: An Anthology in English & French from the Philosophers & Poets* (1916). In his preface, Bridges claims on the one hand that the Prussian 'vision of world empire' makes its citizens 'morally enslaved'.[321] On the other, he has no problem with a British 'world empire':

> Britons have fought well for their country, and their country's Cause is the high Cause of Freedom and Honour. That fairest earthly fame, the fame of Freedom, is inseparable from the names of Albion, Britain, England: it has gone out to America and the Antipodes, hallowing the names of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; it has found a new home in Africa: and this heritage is our glory and happiness. We can therefore be happy in our sorrows, happy even in the death of our beloved who fall in the fight; for they can die nobly, as heroes and saints die, with tears and hands unstained by hatred or wrong. [322]

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[318] David Matless, 'Younghusband, Sir Francis Edward (1863–1942), explorer, geographer, and mystic'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 28 Dec. 2021, from https://www-oxforddnb-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37084.
[319] Frances Younghusband, 'Preface' to *For the Right: Essays and Addresses by members of the fight for the right group* (London: GF Putnam's Sons, 1918), iii.

[320] All of this is explained in detail by Parry's biographer, see Jeremy Dibble, *C. Hubert Parry: His life and Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 485.
[321] Robert Bridges, 'Preface', in *The Spirit of Man: An Anthology in English & French from the Philosophers & Poets* (London: New York: Longmans, Green, 1916), p.3
[322] Bridges, 'Preface', in *The Spirit of Man,* pp. 4-5.

Not unlike that rhetorical 'current' Woolf opposes in 1940, Bridges claims to know exactly what 'freedom' is and how it must be maintained. He sees it as a fundamentally anglophone ideal that is always 'hallowing' British colonies. By holding this view, Bridges distorts the British imperialism colonialism programme.

The association of the hymn with the right-wing politics of Bridges and Younghusband changes not long after the first performance of the Jerusalem hymn in 1916, when Millicent Garrett Fawcett recognized that Blake was a feminist and asked Parry's permission to make the hymn a regular part of suffragist meetings.[323] The *Fight for Right* group also has no patriotic cause to uphold after 1918. Often, the context in which the Jerusalem hymn is performed affects and determines whether it conveys or plays to left, or right-wing views. Yet still in 1940, Woolf wants to ensure Blake's words do not again become part of a warmongering argument. During the Great War, she also writes negatively about patriotic music. Describing a concert at the Queen's Hall where she listens to a 'national anthem & a hymn', she writes in her diary: 'patriotism is a base emotion.' (D I 5) Hearing the music, she observes a complete 'absence of emotion in myself & everyone else.' At this concert and in her reflection afterwards, Woolf notices the waning 'keenness for the war' that Younghusband describes. Woolf's response to this phenomenon is pacifist, whereas Younghusband's is warmongering.

Theoretical explanations for the failure of patriotic music to instil and maintain patriotic feeling may come to us from the writing of Benedict Anderson and Sara Ahmed. It is not enough to say that the destruction caused by the Great War had come to seem futile, though that is clearly true as well. As Benedict Anderson explains, nationhood is fragile since it is based on an 'imagined' sense of belonging to a 'political community' in which no one

[323] Again, see Dibble, *C. Hubert Parry: His life and Music,* p. 485.

member, 'of even the smallest nation', has a chance to know 'most of their fellow-members.'[324] Bridges and Younghusband struggle to appeal to this form of nationhood and the national pride associated with it. Their use of Blake's left-wing poetry might only undermine their aims. As Åkve Bergvall writes, it is 'startling' to find 'one of the most stubbornly anti-war and anti-establishment writers in the English canon being used to make arguments in favour of war.[325] Bridges and Younghusand appropriate Blake's words to promote the same 'warlike state' which Blake passionately believes undermines every single artist. They also expect citizens to love their nation state, but such love cannot be reciprocated. As Sarah Ahmed explains 'love for the nation' is often understood as an 'investment' that the state will return, but the state is unable to do so.[326] This only makes the 'imagined' political community in the nation more fragile, creating hostility and xenophobia.

As Woolf understands, in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid', the state and its political spokespersons cannot reciprocate the freedom which is often surrendered to the state by the individual citizen. Bridges's and Younghusband's appeals to unifying patriotism also conflict with the inequalities of a patriarchal nation state. If, for example, enlistment disproportionally affects the working classes, then how can all members of the political nation share equally in their patriotism? This is another inconvenient fact that persuades Woolf to say: 'patriotism is a base emotion.'

Furthermore, Woolf's fear in 1940 that Blake's poetry might be misappropriated and distorted, repeating what happened in the Great War, for the purposes of warmongering propaganda, proves justified. Humphrey Jennings, for example, made a propaganda film,

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[324] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p.6.
[325] Åkve Bergvall, 'The Blake Syndrome: The Case of "Jerusalem", *Literature/Film Quarterly* Vol. 41 No. 4. (2013): 254-265. (254).

[326] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p.1.

Words for Battle, (1941) funded by the Ministry of Information, which has a voiceover in which Lawrence Olivier reads the Jerusalem hymn, alongside bucolic images of British civilian life.[327] The film-maker Lindsay Anderson says that in *Words for Battle,* Jennings interprets 'great poems of the past through the events of the present.'[328]

By contrast, in 1940, the literary critic Dallas Kenmare seems to think that the converse is true. She writes that of 'the manifestly prophetic poets, Blake is pre-eminently the poet for this moment in England's history.'[329] Kenmare adopts an authentic Blakean reading of 'Mental fight', which cannot be said of Humphrey Jennings. Like Woolf, Kenmare understands that Blake's poetry is suitable to turn to in 1940 when witnessing destruction, not least because 'Mental fight' promises agency, over submission, in mounting a pacifist response. Yet unlike Kenmare, Woolf is not interested in Blake's 'prophetic' aspects. Rather she respects and is excited by the directness with which he asserts 'Mental fight.' It gives her the feeling she can oppose a warmongering 'current.'

4.4. Poetry and peace in Woolf's 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid' and *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

At the end of 'Thoughts on Peace', Woolf reflects on poetry and pacifism, imagining the future conditions of peace:

> At last all the guns have stopped firing. All the searchlights have been extinguished. The natural darkness of a summer's night returns. The innocent sounds of the country are heard again. An apple thuds to the ground. An owl hoots, winging its way from tree to tree. And some half-forgotten words of an old English writer come to mind: 'The huntsmen are up in America…' let us send these fragmentary notes to the huntsmen who are up in America, to the men and women whose sleep has not yet been broken by machine-gun fire, in the belief that they will rethink them

[327] Humphrey Jennings, dir., *Listen to Britain* (London: Crown Film Unit, 1942).
[328] Lindsay Anderson, 'Only connect: Some Aspects of the Work of Humphrey Jennings', reprinted in the booklet included in *The Complete Works of Humphrey Jennings Vol. 2 Fires were started* (London: BFI, 2012), pp.1-9
[329] Dallas Kenmare, 'The Prophet of England,' *Poetry Review* 31 (1940): 397-404.

> generously and charitably, perhaps shape them into something serviceable. And now, in the shadowed half of the world, to sleep. (E VI 245).

While Woolf finds it necessary, earlier in the same essay, to tell her reader she is quoting Blake, even though the Jerusalem hymn is famous, she does not properly cite the line she quotes here, 'The Huntsmen are up in America', which is from a more obscure, seventeenth-century poem, Thomas Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus* (1658). As Jane Goldman notes, Woolf's mentioning Blake by name can seem 'overly didactic.' [330]

Woolf's appeal to America is perhaps Blakean. Like Woolf, Blake strongly associates American culture and politics with left wing progress, especially in his response to the American revolution and the wars of independence, *America a Prophecy* (1793). However, his most striking call for aid from America, comparable to Woolf's above, is in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). He opens this illuminated poem by making America an object for the trauma and mourning of the daughters of Albion who experience mental and physical slavery. They witness Bromion raping Oothoon and bear the responsibility of this trauma: 'ENSLAV'd, the Daughters of Albion weep: a trembling lamentation/ upon their mountains; in their valleys. Sighs towards America' (CPPWB VDA 45).

Neither Blake nor Woolf ever visited America, but it appeals to their imaginations.[331] As Sigmund Skard notes, Europeans became obsessed with understanding the difference between 'the dream' and the 'reality' of American life.[332] This obsession affects both Blake and Woolf, although Woolf writes in a more light-hearted vein in 'America, which I have never seen' (1938).[333] Asked to engage with 'this cosmopolitan world of today', Woolf chooses to write about America, explaining she must rely on 'imagination' as the 'obliging

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[330] Jane Goldman, 'Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Modernism', in *The History of British Women's Writing: 1920-1945*, Maroula Joannou (ed.), (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 57-77

[331] On Woolf and America, see Andrew McNeillie, 'Virginia Woolf's America', *The Dublin Review* Issue No.5. (Winter 2001-2),

[332] Sigmund Skard, *The American Myth and the European Mind; American Studies in Europe, 1777-1960* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), p. 7

[333] Published in the magazine, *Hearst's International.*

guide' willing to 'fly to America and tell you what America is like' (E VI 128). Here, Woolf gives the category of 'imagination' a Blakean form of agency. America is also an important symbolic part of the international politics of Woolf and Blake's 'Mental fight.'[334]

The closing passage to 'Thoughts on Peace' also makes Woolf's pacifist argument ambiguous. Since Woolf published 'Thoughts on Peace' before U.S. intervention in the Second World War, her call for aid can be misinterpreted as a request for military intervention. Is Woolf, despite being a pacifist, calling on American political power to intervene militarily? Or does she doubt that Europe can bring about peace through 'Mental fight'? Does this explain her notion that the 'fragmentary notes' of culture can be rethought into something pacifist in America? These questions further indicate that 'Mental fight' as a Woolfian concept needs reformulation. Rather than reneging on her pacifism, Woolf is offering an initial, provisional definition of peace.

Though historians such as Martin Ceadel are right to question the tendency to examine those 'inter-war years' 1918-1939 'from the perspective of the Second World War', I have done so because Woolf's quotation of Blake from 1940 makes it necessary.[335] Using this retrospective approach also makes it possible to foreground Blake's radical aims and Woolf's appreciation of them. Though 'Mental fight' takes on different meanings in the early twentieth century, with specific significances and resonance both in 1914 and in 1940, quite in contrast to Blake's meaning in 1803, Woolf seeks authentic realisation of Blake's aims.

It is true that Woolf makes pacifist arguments in response to the Great War, such as 'Heard on the Downs: The Genesis of Myth' (1916) and 'War in the Village' (1918), two essays in

[334] See also Blake's illuminated poem *America a Prophecy* (1793)
[335] Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Great Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.2. See also Charles Andrews, *Writing Against War: Literature Activism, and the British Peace Movement* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2017). On Modernism and peace movements, see Grace Brockington, *Above the Battlefield: Modernism and the Peace Movement in Britain 1900-1918* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010)

which Karen L. Levenback rightly says that Woolf politicizes 'the reality of civilian isolation from the war' in order to expose the 'illusion of immunity.'[336] To understand fully, however, that Woolf's writing is no less pacifist in the decades running up to 1940, we must explore Woolf's views on poetry and peace more than a decade after the end of the Great War in *A Room of One's Own*. Her statement in *A Room of One's Own* may represent her views on the subject in general. In that same closing paragraph above from 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Aid', Woolf returns to some thoughts on poetry and peace which she first articulates in *A Room of One's Own*.

In *A Room of One's Own*, as in *Three Guineas* and 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', Woolf explores 'thinking' as a form of 'fighting.' Using a highly specific form of 'Mental fight', namely a dialogic mode of argument that challenges its own authority, Woolf opens her essay by acknowledging that if she attempted to fully address the vast topic of 'women and fiction', then: 'I should never be able to come to a conclusion.' (AROO 1). She does not adopt the dutiful approach of the 'lecturer' who will 'hand you after an hour's discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks and keep on the mantelpiece for ever.' (AROO 3). Instead she makes the first-person pronoun, 'I', lose all meaning, becoming merely a 'convenient term' for a speaker with 'no real being': 'Lies will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping.' (AROO 4-5). With this gesture Woolf passes authority to the reader.

In *Three Guineas,* in a similar way, the narrative voice replies to a letter from a pacifist society that asked: 'How in your opinion are we to prevent war?' (TG 101) In order to have

[336] Karen L. Levenback, 'Woolf's "War In The Village"', in *Virginia Woolf and War* Mark Hussey (ed.) (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p.41. See also her book, *Virginia Woolf and the Great War* (New York State: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

the opportunity to consider this question from many angles, Woolf chooses to write from the perspective of 'the daughters of educated men.' Though controversial, Woolf writes in this voice because she considers these 'daughters' to be both privileged to some extent but also excluded from much of society, especially higher education. Authority is tentative and constantly shifting in *A Room of One's Own, Three Guineas*, and 'Thoughts on Peace.' These texts avoid the Blakean 'single vision', discussed in relation to E.M. Forster's comments on Blake in Chapter Three. Preferring Blake's 'contraries' over reductive 'single vision', Woolf favours complex and supple means of structuring arguments.

Rather than making a pacifist argument per se, Woolf writes in elegiac mode in *A Room of One's Own* about how the Great War has affected modern responses to poetry. During the lunch scene, while trespassing at an 'Oxbridge' college early in the essay, Woolf describes how the emotional power of lyrics in the Victorian period differed from modern poetry:

> I went on to wonder if honestly one could name two living poets now as great as Tennyson and Christina Rossetti were then. […] The very reason why that poetry excites one to such abandonment, such rapture, is that it celebrates some feeling that one used to have (at luncheon parties before the war perhaps), so that one responds easily, familiarly, without troubling to check the feeling, or to compare it with any that one has now. But the living poets express a feeling that is actually being made and torn out of us at the moment. One does not recognize it in the first place; often for some reason one fears it; one watches it with keenness and compares it jealously and suspiciously with the old feeling that one knew. Hence the difficulty of modern poetry; and it is because of this difficulty that one cannot remember more than two consecutive lines of any good modern poet. (AROO 16)

As an example, Woolf mentions Tennyson's line 'She is coming, my dove, my dear', and from Christina Rossetti: 'My heart is gladder than all these/Because my love is come to me.' These exemplify the familiar 'feeling' poetry creates 'before the war.' It is a feeling Woolf thinks knowable and easier to appreciate. Commenting on this shift in modern relations to Victorian poetry, simultaneously posing a rhetorical question, she asks: 'Shall we lay the blame on the war?'

In her response, Woolf laments that ever since 'guns fired in August 1914' there was an immediate effect on 'the faces of men and women', showing that 'romance was killed':

> But why say 'blame'? Why, if it was an illusion, not praise the catastrophe, whatever it was, that destroyed illusion and put truth in its place? For truth…those dots mark the spot where, in search of truth, I missed the turning up to Fernham.' (AROO 17).

According to Woolf, the Great War makes 'truth' and 'illusion' equally vexed, abstract concepts. She explores the idea that the 'romance' of the Victorians always and already was a form of 'illusion.' She appears to suggest this insight is made possible by the 'catastrophe' of the Great War. Therefore, according to Woolf, Victorian poetry is too innocent to be pacifist. It lacks the immediate 'feeling', elegiac or otherwise, that would make poetry pacifist in intent. In addition to Woolf's engagement with poetry and elegy, Bloomsbury thinkers like John Maynard Keynes make economic arguments for the need to maintain peace after the Great War.[337]

It is also through music that *A Room of One's Own* anticipates the argument of 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid.' Emma Sutton has demonstrated Woolf's wide knowledge of 'institutional biases and inequalities of discourse facing women composers.'[338] The ubiquity of the Jerusalem hymn is often at the expense of attention to more interesting musical responses to Blake. For example, the work of Mary Grant Carmichael (1851-1932), one of the first Victorians to compose and publish music set to Blake's poetry in 1876.[339] Another example of a non-warmongering musical setting of Blake's words is Ralph Vaughan Williams's ballet, composed in response to Blake's Book of Job engravings (1826).[340] The

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[337]See John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: MacMillan, 1919).
[338] Emma Sutton, 'Gender Wars in Music', in *Virginia Woolf, Europe, and Peace Volume 1*, p.46.
[339] See Donald Fitch, *Blake Set to Music: A Bibliography of Musical Settings of the Poems and Prose of William Blake* (Berkeley, CA; University of California Press, 1990), xxi. See also Keri Davies, 'Blake set to Music', *Blake 2.0:William Blake in Twentieth-Century Art, Music and Culture*, Steve Clark, Tristanne Connolly, and Jason Whittaker, (eds.), (London: Palgrave, 2012).
[340] On understanding these illustrations in biblical tradition see Christopher Rowland, *Blake and the Bible*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

ballet premiered in London on 5 July 1931, at the Cambridge Theatre. Geoffrey Keynes wrote the libretto, which shows Woolf's circle was aware of the work.

Mary Carmichael is, of course, also one of the names Woolf gives to the narrator in *A Room of One's Own.* Other notable resemblances include Mary Carmichael in the Scottish Ballad, the Four Marys, generally thought to be about Mary Queen of Scots. Given Woolf's historical context in the early twentieth century, the name Mary Carmichael is also an echo of the pioneer of family planning Marie Charlotte Carmichael Stopes (1880-1958). Stopes is a controversial figure, who held eugenicist views. Mary Carmichael's music is different from the Jerusalem hymn. It does not as easily lend itself to patriotic use by groups and individuals. In the absence of definitive evidence that Woolf knew directly of this Victorian composer, we must note Woolf reflects, as shown above, on the Victorians and the music of their poetry in *A Room of One's Own*, and consider that Mary Carmichael is the kind of feminist composer that would interest Woolf

4.5. Conclusion: the internationalism of Woolf's and Blake's pacifism

I have shown above that Blake was important to left and right wing alike. His writing can be used to support the ideas of Robert Bridges and Francis Younghusband, but also the progressive ideas of Woolf, the AIA, and the suffragist movement. To clarify the ambiguous political nature of the Jerusalem hymn, it will help to contrast it to a hymn that seems more singularly patriotic, 'Rule Britannia.' This hymn is undeniably closer to Robert Bridges's vision of Britain than Blake's poem. It has a (for us) controversial imperialist message. It is also a famous example of the type of hymn which Woolf dislikes for being patriotic. In 1915 and 1940, the years in which Woolf openly disparages this patriotic hymn, the hymn's ability to stir patriotic British identity is much the same as it is today. For example, in 1914, against his better judgement, the French cubist painter and sculptor, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska writes

that the German army really does 'deserve a big defeating to the tune of "Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves."'[341]

Whereas Blake sees in 'Englands green & pleasant land' a future when the violence of the British state has come to an end, the words of 'Rule Britannia' are unequivocally nationalist and promote the British Empire. Like Blake's poem *Milton a poem in 2 Books*, 'Rule Britannia' is part of eighteenth-century history. Though Blake finishes this long poem in response to Milton in the beginning of the nineteenth century in 1803, his ideas are clearly part of the long eighteenth century and affected by eighteenth-century revolutionary and republican politics. Yet Blake's pacifism and his appeal to nationalism also bring him closest in the early twentieth century, in its two world wars, to the zeitgeist: to what is at the forefront of cultural anxiety and innovation.

Originally 'Rule Britannia' was only one part of Thomas A. Arne's opera *Alfred: a masque* (1740), with libretto by the poet James Thomson (1700-1748) and David Mallet. More recently, from the early twentieth century and into the first decades of the twenty-first century, the Jerusalem hymn and 'Rule Britannia' continue to be performed on the last night of the Proms. Its imperialist message has also increasingly come to be understood in relation to British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. In a letter to the Guardian newspaper, the art historian, John Barrell recently points out that in the eighteenth century, the word 'slave', which appears in the hymn, possessed 'a wider range of meanings than it has today':

> The claim that Britons would never be slaves would have been understood to mean that Britons would never consent to be the subjects of an arbitrary ruler, a "haughty tyrant," such as had been removed by the revolution of 1688.

Barrell shows us that 'Rule Britannia' has some of the anti-authoritarian message that its twenty-first-century detractors possess. He adds that if 'Rule Britannia' is meant to be

[341] Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, a letter to his parents, as quoted in H.S. Ede, *Savage Messiah* (London: Heinemann, 1931), p. 23

‘referring only to chattel slavery, by which Britain was greedily enriching itself in the eighteenth century, it is certainly offensive.’

Yet Barrell cautions that the intent of the song was also to oppose the ‘infringement of the rights of free-born Britons, exemplified by the recent attempt to prorogue parliament, and the apparent determination of the present government to limit the role of the Commons’: ‘Thus understood, the song is revealed as entirely appropriate to present-day Britannia.’[342] Barrell’s argument shows that ‘Rule Britannia’ is similar to the Jerusalem hymn. He implies that ‘Rule Britannia’ is a text of dissenting ‘Mental fight.’ However, Blake would not have believed that his poem about Jerusalem and ‘Mental fight’ could eventually become a piece of music as well-known as ‘Rule Britannia.’

In both Woolf and Blake’s thinking, the term ‘Mental fight’ threatens to bring the artist into dangerously close relation to the warmongering nation state that needs to be denounced. However much Woolf and Blake want to distance their ideas and work from warmongering, making a call for peace requires some degree of attention from the state itself. Woolf addresses the relation of the artist to the nation state and society explicitly in that same essay for the AIA, ‘Why Art To-Day Follows Politics.’ She concludes that the relation of artist to society has often been most stable at ‘times of peace’:

> The artist on his side held that since the value of his work depended upon freedom of mind, security of person, and immunity from practical affairs – for to mix art with politics he held was to adulterate it – he was absolved from political duties; sacrificed many of the privileges that the active citizen enjoyed; and in return created what is called a work of art. Society on its side bound itself to run the State in such a manner that it paid the artist a living wage; asked no active help from him; and considered itself repaid by those works of art which have always formed one of its chief claims to distinction. (E VI 76).

[342] John Barrell, ‘Rule, Britannia! is out of tune with the times’, 25 Tuesday August, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/aug/25/rule-britannia-is-out-of-tune-with-the-times

Yet, Woolf adds, there are often 'lapses and breaches on both sides.' The relation between artist and society failed in 1803 at Blake's trial for sedition when false accusations about Blake's treasonous speech were made by Private Scholfield.[343] If we think back to Blake's statement 'On Virgil' in the last decade of his life, he too believed the artist could only function in conditions of peace.

When Woolf touches on the artist's need to retreat from the duties of 'the active citizen', she surreptitiously draws attention to an ideal of poetic idleness associated with the classical Latin term *otium.* Brian Vickers advises modern critics of poetry not to assume *otium* is 'an unqualified good.' [344] He explains that in its original context *otium* was a deviation from the 'active life expected of a Roman citizen', associated with indulgence in luxury during the militarised Roman republic.[345] *Otium* therefore represents a form of masculinity that Bloomsbury challenges through conscientious objection.[346] Vickers also admits the term does not have one definition, citing Jean Marie André's study of how its meaning shifts over time.[347] Much more recently, Jane Goldman asserts *otium* is a highly active and energetic principle in Woolf's positive attempts to establish lasting peace.[348] For Goldman, conscientious objection is not identical to *otium,* which she conceptualises as Woolf's

[343] For an account of the incident and subsequent sedition trials in Petworth and Chichester, see G.E. Bentley, *The Stranger from Paradise: A biography of William Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.251-268. See also: 'Blake's Memorandum in Refutation of the Information and Complaint of John Scolfield, a private soldier', August 1803', Erdman pp. 734-35.
[344] Brian Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: the ambivalence of otium', *Renaissance Studies* Volume Vol. 4 No. 1 (1990), 1-37, (1).
[345] Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: the ambivalence of otium', (5).
[346] Mark Hussey, 'Clive Bell, "a fathead and a voluptuary": Conscientious Objection and British Masculinity', *Queer Bloomsbury*, Brenda Helt and Madelyn Detloff (ed.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

[347] Jean-Marie André, *L'Otium dans la vie et intellectuelle à Rome des origines à l'époque Augustéene* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966).
[348] See Jane Goldman, '"Messages of Peace"': Bloomsbury's Peace Terms; or, Working for "ancient woolf's peace-time university", in *Virginia Woolf, Europe and Peace, Volume 2: Aesthetics and Theory,* Peter Adkins and Derek Ryan (eds) (South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2020), pp.11-35. Cf. Goldman's chapter: 'Case Study: Bloomsbury's Pacifist Aesthetics: Woolf, Keynes, Rodker', in *The Handbook to the Bloomsbury Group,* Derek Ryan and Stephen Ross (eds) (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

complete rethinking of the economy on which work is predicated.[349] If we define Woolf's 'Mental fight' following Goldman, the aim of 'Mental fight' becomes slightly clearer. It no longer means simply finding pacifism by any means. It means trying to restructure, and/or break with the structure that creates fascism. I have touched on this already, but Goldman shows us a form of radical idleness which energises Woolf to end fascism and war.

While 'Mental fight' must remain subject to redefinition, in addition to this question of work, Woolf is very precise in expressing a pacifist revision of the English literary canon. In 'The Leaning Tower', for instance, Woolf claims:

> Literature is no one's private ground; literature is common ground. It is not cut up into nations; there are no wars there. Let us trespass freely and fearlessly and find our own way for ourselves. It is thus that English literature will survive this war and cross the gulf – if commoners and outsiders like ourselves make that country our own country; if we teach ourselves how to read and how to write, how to preserve and how to create. (E VI 278).

Woolf is trying to avoid an Anglocentric notion of literary canons. In 'Thoughts on Peace', she tries to remove Blake's words from a fixed, reductive place in 'English literature.' Given Woolf's challenge to the Anglocentric, it is interesting Jed Esty includes Woolf among the modernists developing an 'Anglocentric culture paradigm' for nostalgic celebrations of 'England's cultural integrity and authenticity.'[350] Esty's view is problematic because Woolf witnesses and opposes the Anglocentric focus on 'English literature' becoming part of warmongering nationalism. Her essays increasingly attempt to separate literatures from nations so that 'outsiders like ourselves make that country our own country.'

We can conclude therefore that Woolf's and Blake's pacifism needs to be internationalist. Modernist engagements with the 'anglocentric' aspects of Blake were usually scathing, for

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[349] In this respect Goldman's argument is in dialogue with engagements with the term *otium* in contemporary political theory: Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*, Daniel Ross, (trans), (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

[350] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2004), p.2

example D.H. Lawrence's short story 'England my England' (1915), in which it seems that the devastating Great War is shown to destroy Blake's pastoral ideal of England as 'green & pleasant land.'[351] Yet there remains a tension when in 'The Leaning Tower', Woolf uses the word 'English', while also seeking to divest literature of national boundaries. Despite her preference for the original source of Blake's words in print, she succeeds in presenting the Jerusalem hymn as internationalist, secular, and co-operative. By contrast, though Barrell rightly identifies a potential 'Mental fight' in 'Rule Britannia', it is impossible to consider that an internationalist hymn.

On the internationalist left, George Orwell's is the influential voice that represents a slightly different perspective on patriotism from Woolf in 'Thoughts on Peace.' Woolf's 'The Leaning Tower' was published in *Folios of New Writing*, in the autumn of 1940, a biannual journal edited by John Lehmann, alongside Orwell's essay 'My Country Right or Left.' In this essay Orwell asserts that 'Patriotism has nothing to do with conservatism.'[352] He wants a left-wing form of patriotism. Woolf shares Orwell's opposition to 'conservatism', but she does not approve of the term 'patriotism.' She clearly would not accept Orwell's argument that a left-wing patriotism is possible. She believes that pacifism and left-wing politics must be international.

While Woolf reuses Blake as part of her internationalist argument, there were modernists such as the Welsh poet David Jones who avoid appropriating Blake's writing for propaganda, but lack Woolf's interest in a feminist and socialist Blake. Jones was an artist like Blake, and engraved illustrations to, for example, Coleridge's poem 'The Ancient Mariner.'[353] Jones's ambition as a poet is also Blakean. As Randall Stevenson remarks, Jones's major poem *In*

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[351] D.H. Lawrence, 'England my England', 'English Review', V.21, no. 3 (Oct, 1915).
[352] George Orwell, 'My Country Right or Left', *Folios of New Writing* John Lehmann (ed.), (London: Hogarth Press, 1940).
[353] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* with ten engravings on copper by David Jones (Bristol: Douglas Clevendon, 1929).

Parenthesis (1937) is a rare example of a poem about the First World War that strives for 'mythic vision.'[354] Jones says that Blake's Jerusalem hymn is characterised by a biblical 'inclination' to 'identify one's own national group' with future religious redemption.[355] Therefore, Jones concludes, Blake imagines a future Jerusalem in an England of a 'green and pleasant land', not along the lines of 'Augustine's City of God' but rather as 'a more local paradise.'[356] There is a tension between Jones's reading of Blake and the internationalist view of Blake's poem that I am recovering in Woolf's essay.

In contrast to Jones, Eugene Jolas offers a more internationalist response to Blake's musical poetry. Woolf's diaries and essays mention neither Jolas nor Jones, but both belong to the broader intellectual context in which she thinks about Blake. In 'Enter the Imagination', an essay printed in *Transition* the Paris based magazine he edited, Jolas comments that even though the modern avant-garde was no longer 'ripe for a religious art', Blake's 'Manichaean' example remained interesting.[357] In 1935 he also concludes that to understand Blake's 'attitude to the word' we need to see it as 'liturgical' and 'hymnic', suggesting that music is intrinsic to Blake's printed poems irrespective of the hymnal scores imposed onto it.[358] Jolas shares Woolf's view that Blake's 'Mental fight' is important throughout Europe, not only resonant in England as Jones' believes.

When she engages with 'Mental fight' Virginia Woolf confidently uses one of Blake's prophetic texts. This shows her view of Blake diverging from that of Leonard Woolf in his 1925 review of Geoffrey Keynes's new Blake edition. She finds a way to reinvent the

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[354] Randall Stevenson, *Literature and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). p. 172. See: David Jones, *In Parenthesis,* T.S. Eliot (intro.) (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).
[355] David Jones, 'Christopher Smart' (1939), in *Epoch and Artist: Selected Writings,* p.283.
[356] Ibid, p. 283.
[357] Eugene Jolas, 'Enter the Imagination', *transition* Eugene Jolas, Elliot Paul, and Robert sage (eds.), Paris, October 1927, pp.157-160, (159).
[358] Eugene Jolas, *Critical Writings, 1924-1951,* Klaus H. Kiefer and Rainer Rumold (eds.), (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp.281-2.

potentially didactic quality in Blake's assertive 'Mental fight', making it supple and open to reinterpretation. By keeping the precise meaning of 'Mental fight' subject to revision, Virginia Woolf achieves a highly sensitive treatment of Blake which is truer to Blake's modernity than the Jerusalem hymn. She shows us it is the practice of 'Mental fight' that continues to make Blake modern and resonant. In 1940 she is sure 'Mental fight' will not only fall into the hands of the 'ignorant hirelings' despised by Woolf and Blake equally.

While I have focused on the radical critique 'Mental fight' promises, we will see a slightly different perspective at the opening of the next chapter when looking at how Woolf and Blake write about country and city. Though Woolf denounces 'patriotism' in 'Thoughts on Peace', her views in private were sometimes different. A central piece of evidence for my argument in Chapter Five will be Blake's poem 'London', the same radical poem that opposes 'mind-forg'd manacles' and that reacts against the political sphere of the eighteenth century.

Blake's poem is far removed from the eighteenth-century London dominated by those coffee houses, idealised by both Leslie Stephen and Jürgen Habermas, as the centre of rational public debate.[359] Woolf knew about the importance of the coffee houses from her father's influential scholarship on the eighteenth century. Habermas's evidence for his claims about the centrality of the coffee houses to the public sphere in London was in fact Leslie Stephen's study of the eighteenth century. Stephen wrote that by 1708 already 'there were three thousand coffee-houses', each with a unique 'habitual circle.'[360] In the next chapter, I discuss Blake's understanding of figures marginalised by London's eighteenth-century culture.

[359] Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).
[360] Leslie Stephen, *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1904), p.35.

Habermas' male-centred definition of the public sphere has been generally challenged for a long time now in feminist historical theory.[361] There have also been numerous studies rightly claiming that Woolf's attitude to her father's work on the eighteenth-century public sphere was feminist.[362] She felt ambivalent about her father's approach to the eighteenth century, which begins in 1903 with Stephen's research on eighteenth-century literature for his Ford lectures.

When invited, by J.J. Thomson, Master of Trinity College Cambridge, to give the same annual lectures in 1932, Woolf felt it was an 'honour' and a sign of progress that this was 'the first time a woman has been asked.' (D IV 79). Yet despite her elated sense of having 'advanced to this glory', no longer an 'uneducated child reading in my room at 22 H.P.G', Woolf also worries about the effect lecturing at a university will have on her practice of critique:

> But I shall refuse: because how could I write 6 lectures, to be delivered in full term, without giving up a year to criticism; without becoming a functionary; without sealing my lips when it comes to tilting at Universities; without putting off my Knock at the Door; without perhaps shelving another novel (D IV 79).

Though she describes herself as having at one time been an 'uneducated child', her earliest education has been long recognized as precocious, especially after Christine Kenyon Jones and Anna Snaith documented the extent of Woolf's education in evening classes at Kings College in London between 1897 and 1901. [363] Woolf also receives training in classical Greek

[361] See for example L.Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
[362] See for example comments on Woolf, Stephen, and Habermas in the following works: Anna Snaith, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2003); Anne E. Fernald, 'Virginia Woolf's Revisions of the eighteenth century' *in Virginia Woolf: Feminism and the Reader* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp.85-11.
[363] See Christine Kenyon Jones and Anna Snaith, '"Tilting at Universities": Woolf at King's College London', *Woolf Studies Annual,* Vol. 16 (2010). 1-44 (2).

from Clara Pater and her substantial classical erudition was recently revealed by the publication of her juvenile notes.[364]

Perhaps, in response to the invitation to lecture, Woolf distances the critical potential of what she later calls 'Mental fight' from the University as an institution, seeing 'criticism' as not the same as 'Mental fight', less powerful as a means of making 'thinking' itself a positive form of 'fighting.' As Melba Cuddy Keane notes, Woolf seeks a 'dialogic rather than an authoritarian relation between writer and reader', which can only happen outside of 'educational institutions.'[365] I quoted above Blake's bold belief that dreaded 'ignorant hirelings' often live and work in the University as well as 'the camp and the court.' Woolf similarly scorns individuals in the University who avoid challenging their institutions, whether national or local, for material gain. There is a Blakean aspect to Woolf's insistence on not being corrupted by the prestige of the Ford Lectures. To conclude, her phrase 'tilting at Universities' is part of her longstanding wish to make 'thinking' into effective 'fighting.' Next I will address how the difficulty of 'Mental fight' manifests itself in Woolf and Blake 's writing about the country and city.

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[364] Virginia Woolf, *An unpublished Notebook* (1907-09), Mireille Duchêne (ed. with intro), (Dijon: Éditions Universitaire de Dijon, 2019). On Woolf and Hellenism see Vassiliki Kolocotroni, 'Strange Cries' and Ancient Songs': Woolf's Greek and the Politics of Intelligibility' in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, pp.423-438; Theodore Koulouris, *Hellenism and Loss in the Work of Virginia Woolf* (London : Routledge, 2018), and Nancy Worman, *Virginia Woolf's Greek Tragedy* (London : Bloomsbury, 1919).

[365] Melby Cuddy Keane, *Virginia Woolf, The Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.2

5: The Country and the City in Woolf and Blake

In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' Woolf reflects on Blake and pastoral poetry. She observes that Blake is not obviously a poet of the city or of the country. The distinction between the country and the city is central to the pastoral as a poetic form that classically links urban and rural sites through descriptions of the countryside that soothe tired and busy city dwellers. In the previous chapter I discussed Blake's pastoral image of England as a 'green & pleasant land', an image that easily lends itself to patriotic feeling and rhetoric. This chapter assesses how Woolf and Blake imagine the relation between country and city. It develops the argument in Chapter Four by considering 'Mental fight' in relation to an ancient literary theme. Since I am interested in continuities between Blake's eighteenth century and Woolf's modernist response to London, I do not discuss the very interesting changes to technology and infrastructure in early twentieth-century London. [366] Nor am I interested in mapping Woolf's London, though this is also an area of innovative scholarship.[367] As Christina Alt observes, Woolf critics often assess her interest in the natural world in 'broadly symbolic terms', understanding Woolf's interest in the natural world to connect her to 'Shakespeare,

[366] See for example David Wells, *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012); Andrew Thacker, 'Virginia Woolf: Literary Geography and the Kaleidoscope of Travel', in his book *Moving through modernity: Space and geography in modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 152-191; David Bradshaw, 'Great Avenues of Civilisation': The Victorian Embankment and Piccadilly Circus Underground Station in the Novels of Virginia Woolf and Chelsea Embankment in Howard's End', in *Transits: The Nomadic Geographies of Anglo-American Modernism*. Giovanni Cianco, Caroline Patey and Sara Sullam (eds.), (Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp.202-206.

[367] See Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Virginia Woolf's London: a guide to Bloomsbury and beyond* (London: Tauris, 2009); and Lisbeth Larsson, *Walking through Virginia Woolf's London: An Investigation in Literary Geography,* David Jones (trans.), (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017). See Elisa Kay Sparks, 'Leonard and Virginia Woolf's London Library: Mapping London's Tides, Streams and Statues', in V*irginia Woolf's Bloomsbury, Vol I: Aesthetic Theory and Literary Practice*, (eds.), Gina Potts and Lisa Shahiri (Hampshire and New York: Macmillan, 2010), pp.64-77. On Woolf and maps in general see: Diane Filby Gillespie, 'Maps of her Own', *Woolf Studies Annual,* Vol. 25 (2019): 97-135, 197. Cf. Blake scholars also map Blake's London: Paul Miner, 'Blake's London: Times & Spaces', *Studies in Romanticism,* Vol. 41 No.2 (Summer, 2002), 379-316.

Milton', the Romantic poets, as well as 'classical and biblical texts.'[368] I am most interested in this critical approach.

5.1. London: Woolf's 'only patriotism'

On 13 January 1941, after Leonard and Virginia Woolf's home at 47 Mecklenburgh Square is destroyed by a bomb, Woolf writes to the composer Ethel Smyth:

> How odd it is being a countrywoman after all these years of being Cockney! For almost the first time in my life I've not a bed in London. D'you know what I'm doing tomorrow? Going up to London Bridge. Then I shall walk, all along the Thames, in and out where I used to haunt, so through the Temple, up the Strand and out into Oxford Street, where I shall buy macaroni and lunch. No. You never shared my passion for the great city. Yet it's what, in some odd corner of my dreaming mind, represents Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens. It's my only patriotism: save one vision, in Warwickshire one spring [May 1934] when we were driving back from Ireland and I saw a stallion being led, under the May and the beeches, along a grass ride; and I thought that is England (L VI 460).

Woolf writes this in the countryside, at home in Rodmell, East Sussex, which appears to increase the excitement for her of spending a day in London. Evoked both by her favourite parts of London that she 'used to haunt', and 'in some odd corner' of her 'dreaming mind' by its writers 'Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens', Woolf's 'only patriotism' is a problem for persisting in 'Mental fight.' It elicits in her a patriotic feeling she otherwise resists ardently. The only other 'vision' she presents of lapses into patriotism is an idyllic pastoral image: 'in Warwickshire one spring when we were driving back from Ireland and I saw a stallion being led, under the May and the beeches, along a grass ride; and I thought that is England.' Woolf's 'Mental fight' is a necessary discipline that reduces the potency of such images to stir her 'only patriotism.' It is significant that Woolf does not mention Blake when reflecting in a private letter to Smyth on her 'only patriotism.' It does imply that Woolf sees Blake as distinct from her 'only patriotism.'

[368] Christina Alt, *Virginia Woolf and the study of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.5.

Woolf's reference to places in London that she 'used to haunt' is reminiscent of her surreal hybrid text, of essay and short story, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' (1927), in which a writer goes walking through London in search of somewhere to buy a pencil.[369] The search for a pencil is a metaphor for the initial impetus to write, a metaphor that makes London and writing seem inextricable. Julian Wolfreys proposes 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' as exemplary response to London's protean and fluctuating modernity, implicitly therefore linking Woolf's text to Blake. In various parts of his study *Writing London* (1998), Wolfreys puts Woolf and Blake forward as writers who understand the need to 'observe' London from 'at the margin of events', 'displacing and even erasing identity' to capture its protean and 'liminal condition.'[370] Similarly, Raymond Williams's classic study, *The Country and the City* (1973), which provides the title of this chapter, discusses both Woolf and Blake. Though Williams does not explicitly link the two, he uses both of them to explore how treatments of London change over time, but he does so from a Marxist and historically materialist perspective, whereas Wolfreys takes a Derridean approach. [371] When applied to Blake, Wolfreys argument does not work only in theory. As Jennifer Michael Davis points out in Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, London 'unfolds not all at once, as in an urban map or architectural plan, but rather in a series of miniature, localized spaces, like London squares as a child might encounter them.'[372]

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[369] Printed in the *Yale Review*, October 1927.

[370] Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: the trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p.199. See also Alan Robinson, *Imagining London*, 1770-1900 (Basingstoke: Houndmills, 2004).

[371] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973). Williams Marxist approach was influential. See for example Stewart Crehan, *Blake in Context* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984). There is also a Marxist reading of Blake's 'London': Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: art and politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.142-43. Cf. Williams is also an important commentator on the Bloomsbury group: 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays*, (London: Verso, 1980), pp.148-69.

[372]Jennifer Davis Michael, *Blake and the City* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2006), p.40

5.2. Woolf, London's literary heritage and Blake

When Woolf names Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickens as central figures in the image she forms of London, she also implicitly makes these writers central to a view of literary responses to London based on the idea of literary heritage. Andrea Zemgulys defines this form of heritage as a 'nostalgic' and 'ideological' reimagining of the past, extending from the Victorian into the modernist period, that makes 'especial use of *literature*' with the effect of 'translating imaginary settings into writers' footpaths and authors into house-dwelling persons.' [373] As tools for the recreation of literary history as heritage, Zemgulys includes 'museums and memorials' as well as texts that idealise London as 'historic' and England as 'literary.' It is important to add that Woolf seriously respects Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickens. She is not saying they are nostalgic and nationalist writers, merely that she knows these writers often appeal to a nostalgic form of patriotism. Though institutionalised heritage presents itself as if it maintains the collective memory of important authors that would otherwise be lost, it tends to distort the author in question.

Zemgulys also argues that modernists, including Virginia Woolf, take an interest in heritage. While Edward Thomas's book *A Literary Pilgrim in England*, which Woolf reviews in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', may be an example of heritage, defining regions in the UK according to the literary past, Woolf is also critical of idealised recreations of the past. In the sketch she makes in a notebook, 'Carlyle's House' (1909), Woolf describes visiting the museum at 50 Cheyne Row, former Chelsea home of the Victorian historian Thomas Carlyle and his wife Jane Welsh Carlyle. She finds that it has 'the look of something forcibly preserved; it is incongruous now, set between respectable family mansions' (CH 3). Woolf is

[373] Andrea Zemgulys, *Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.1. On the ideology of literary heritage in rural settings in Woolf's work, see Sarah Edwards, '"Permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation": The Country House, Preservation and Nostalgia in Vita Sackville West's *The Edwardians* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*' in *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics*, Tammy Clewell (ed.), (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013).

not positive about such attempts to preserve the literary past, suspecting that they distort the past, falsely re-imagining it, as we might expect from literary heritage. Woolf sees this museum as 'forcibly preserved' because it tries to preserve an idealised image of an obsolete Victorian writer. As a concept, heritage must be added to pastoral as we assess how Woolf understands the relation between country and city.

In 'Great Men's Houses' (1932), one of six London Scene Essays written for *Good Housekeeping* magazine, Woolf expresses the ironic idea that the increasing number of museums in London devoted to writers takes readers away from the focusing on literature itself:

> London, happily, is becoming full of great men's houses, bought for the nation and preserved entire with chairs they sat on and the cups they drank from, their umbrellas and their chests of drawers. And it is no frivolous curiosity that sends us to Dickens's house and Johnson's house and Carlyle's house and Keats's house. We know them from their houses – it would seem to be a fact that writers stamp themselves upon their possessions more indelibly than other people. (E VI 294).

Woolf mocks the conservative notion that the trace left by a writer affects their 'possessions more indelibly' than it does for 'other people.' She shows us that the writer's house exemplifies a conservative form of literary heritage.

Such conservative heritage was not something that affected Blake in the first decades of the twentieth century. Despite living in various places in London and despite being an inspiring radical London poet and painter, Blake had not been institutionalised by the nostalgic space of the writer's home as museum. As I state in Chapter One, it is clear from 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' that Woolf appreciates that Blake cannot be 'pinned down.' The fact there is no single museum dedicated to one of Blake's homes only increases this appeal. It justifies Woolf's view that empirical criticism does not work for Blake's poetry about London. Yet there are moments when Blake was used for a nostalgic view of the past. As I show in the previous chapter, the Jerusalem hymn is a highly conservative and nostalgic cultural use of

Blake. Even a writer as radical as Blake might need sometimes to be defended against heritage.

Literary heritage is also a means of using the past to obscure the conditions of the present moment. This helps us understand why, faced in 1940 with the destruction of her London home and with catastrophic military conflict, Woolf turns to a nostalgic view of the literary past. This dynamic between past and present also applies throughout the years during which Woolf writes the London Scene essays. According to Sonita Sarker, Woolf understands the difference between 'English culture' and 'obligations as a citizen of England':

> The rhetoric or racial identity as that pertained to Englishness was caught in the uneasy triangle of empire, nationhood, and democracy, and was particularly strong in the years when Woolf was in the process of writing the six essays collectively called *The London Scene*, yet curiously absent in her work. [374]

It would be wrong to think Woolf's London is more cosmopolitan, ethnically and racially diverse than Blake's. In eighteenth-century Britain, as Gretchen Gerzina states, 'particularly in London', the 'black population' was a 'community', able to rally 'joint action and solidarity', meaning that the 'material rewards of slavery' are a problem for Thomas Paine's liberal arguments.[375]

Incidentally, one of Blake's images that interests Woolf in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', the 'bulls' that 'drag the sulphur sun out of the deep' is taken from a line about slavery in *Milton a Poem in 2 Books*: 'When Luvahs bulls each morning drag the sulphur Sun out of the Deep/ Harnessd with starry harness black & shining kept by black slaves.' (CPPWB M 115). Blake's relation to slavery is part of general knowledge in the early twentieth century. Geoffrey Keynes, for example, in his *A Bibliography of William Blake* of 1921, made readers

[374] Sonita Sarker, 'Locating a Native Englishness in Virginia Woolf's The London Scene', *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 13 No. 2 (Summer, 2001), pp.1-30 (2)
[375] Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life before Emancipation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 6

aware of Blake's engraved illustrations to an eighteenth-century colonial narrative, written by the soldier John Gabriel Stedman (1744-1797), about his time on the colony of Surinam.[376] Blake's 'The Little Black Boy', his most famous poem that might be about race in London, has such religious symbolic imagery. But this work is often misunderstood due to its 'awareness of God's presence and benison', and it is felt to be a poem that 'is miles away from England.'[377] Yet although Blake and Woolf are imaginative and symbolic writers, they nonetheless write about London as it is. Blake's enslaved children in 'The Little Black Boy' – Blake sees children of all races as enslaved – are not, as Lily Gurton-Watchter writes, figures for the 'manufacture of sympathy.'[378] Blake uses these figures to expose brutalising social structures in eighteenth-century London.

Woolf's relation to race remains a source of controversy. In *A Room of One's Own* she makes this intensely problematic statement: 'It is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her.' (AROO 59). Tuzyline Jita Allan writes that Woolf's 'appropriative gesture' betrays an 'unapologetic pride' for 'her cultural inheritance, the underside of her radical politics.'[379] Woolf always needs to find critical means of overcoming this 'pride.' Similarly Mark Hussey claims a critical race theory cannot be derived from Woolf, commenting that 'the only radical politics for Woolf was sexual politics.'[380]Jane Marcus writes that Woolf lacks a 'concept of the black woman artist, someone who could be her sister or her friend, someone with whom

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[376] See Keynes, *Bibliography of William Blake*, pp.240-241. Cf. John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* illustrated with so elegant engravings made by the author (London: Joseph Johnson, 1796). Both Copy 1 and 2 are in the collection of Robert N.Essick.
[377] Stanley Gardner, *Blake's* Innocence *and* Experience *Retraced* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986),p.61.
[378] Lily Gurton-Wachter, 'Blake's "Little Black Thing": Happiness and Injury in the age of Slavery', *ELH*, Vol. 87 No.2, (Summer 2020), 519-552 (524). For critical readings of race in the romantic era see: Bakary Diaby, 'Feeling Black, Feeling Black: Fragility and Romanticism,' *Symbiosis* 23.1 (2019): 117-139. Blake's poetry has been interpreted in relation to African Literature: Lauren Henry, 'Sunshine and Shady Groves: What Blake's "Little Black Boy" Learned from African Writers', *Blake: An illustrated Quarterly* Vol. 29 No.1 (Summer 1995), 4-11.
[379] Tuzyline Jita Allan, *Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics* (Athens: Ohio University Press,1995), p. 22
[380] Mark Hussey, *The Singing of the Real World* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986), p.133.

to share A Room of One's Own or a laboratory.'[381] Criticism cannot adequately address Woolf's statement. Only creative responses can, such as Kabe Wilson's anagrammatic rewriting of *A Room of One's Own* – turning it into *Of one Woman or So* by Olivia N'Gowfri – which tells the story of a young African woman coming to study at Cambridge University in the twenty-first century.

Because Woolf's London Scene essays are partly about heritage sites that promote a dangerous ethnic English identity, we need to look to other essays in which Woolf writes about London. We need to see how she opposes definitions of 'Englishness' that dangerously make it a 'racial identity' rather than – in Woolf's mind – a term that points to democratic principles. Woolf's critical view of empire, for example, is very clear in her essay about the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, in which she describes uninspiring scenes: 'Men like pin-cushions, men like pouter pigeons, men like pillar boxes, pass in procession. Dust swirls after them. Admirably impassive, the bands of Empire march on' (E III 413).[382] These men are mentally enslaved to empire, rather than its free subjects. We must remember, as Elleke Boehmer writes, 'empire in Virginia Woolf is almost invariably associated with self-delusion, more bewilderment and a sense of incipient failure.'[383]

5.3. Innocence and vice in the country and the city

The 1924 Empire Exhibition is a re-imagining of the present moment of empire that is supported by a nostalgic view of the British Empire throughout its history. David Bradshaw

[381] Jane Marcus, *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p.3
[382] On Woolf's essay see Scott Cohen, 'Woolf, Wembley, and Imperial Monuments', *Modern Fiction Studies,* 50.1 (2004), 85-109; Kurt Koenigsburger, 'Virginia Woolf and the empire exhibition of 1924: Modernism, Excess, and the Verandahs of Realism', in *Locating Woolf: the politics of Space and Place,* Anna Snaith and Michael Whitworth (eds.) (London: Palgrave, 2007), pp.99-114. On Blake as a critic of empire see David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of his Own Times*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969).
[383] Elleke Boehmer, 'Empire and modern writing', in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature,* Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 59

explains that Woolf often expresses 'straightforwardly nostalgic and patriotic' ideas, whenever she writes about 'London and its literary heritage', because the city is a 'principal source of her inspiration', and part of the 'matrix of her writerly identity.'[384] While I maintain that Blake's 'Mental fight' is radical, Susan Merril Squier finds Blake's reimagining of London not quite radical enough:

> Yet whereas Blake's celestial city is modelled – as its name indicates – along the patriarchal lines of Christian revelation, the celestial city for which Woolf urges us to fight in "Thoughts on Peace" is vividly anti-patriarchal: its men have renounced both their glory and their guns, and its women have relinquished the privileges of the home – among them.[385]

Squier reminds us that 'Mental fight' entails risks. In 1940 men who renounce military myth of 'glory' and women rejecting 'privileges of the home' do so at personal cost. While Squier is also right that Woolf translates Blake's symbolic interest in 'Christian revelation' into 'anti-patriarchal' and anti-capitalist ideas, we must also try to recover what is already 'vividly anti-patriarchal' about Blake's work. His prose on the subject of 'Mental fight' is a stronger instance of 'vividly anti-patriarchal' argument, than the 'Mental fight' associated with the poetry that he prints from the same plate. Blake's 'ignorant hirelings' are all patriarchal figures, exposed as corrupt for that reason.

To understand Blake's poetry about London as a challenge to patriarchy we need to remember that Blake challenges capitalism and specifically London as the eighteenth-century epicentre of capitalism. Often, it has been Blake's 'metropolitan perspective' that makes him appear a radical poet.[386] While Woolf's representation of London is also influenced by Dickens's nineteenth-century realist novels, we would do well to remember what Kenneth R.

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[384] David Bradshaw, 'Woolf's London', in *Virginia Woolf in Context,* Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 239.
[385] Susan Merrill Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London*: *the Sexual Politics of the City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp.185-186.
[386] Saree Makdisi, 'Blake's metropolitan Radicalism', in *Romantic Metropolis: The urban scene of British culture, 1780-1840* (eds.), James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin: (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 113.

Johnston says, that there is 'much more tension and fruitful ambiguity in the Romantic mythic view of the city than in the Victorian.'[387] While Johnston contrasts the Romantic and Victorian views of London, Raymond Williams entertains the idea that Blake's poem 'London', from the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), is actually 'a precise prevision of the essential and literary methods and purposes of Dickens.'[388]

Williams claims Blake initiates a critique of capitalist social structure that later becomes culturally pervasive in the nineteenth century in Dickens's novels.[389] According to Williams, Blake's 'London' subverts the eighteenth-century pastoral convention of imagining 'innocence in the country, vice in the city by making both innocence and vice part of the city, deeply embedded 'in its factual and spiritual relations.'[390] Like Blake, Woolf muddies the distinction between country and city. Shifting attention of modernist studies from the city to the country, Sam Wiseman argues Woolf's 'sedimentary layering of the past within rural landscapes is applied to her reimagining of the urban environment', which means her work often 'inverts urban-rural associations.' [391] Blake more commonly features in discussion of modernism and the London metropolis, than rural settings.[392]

Williams also concludes that Blake's 'London' does not merely expose 'appalling conditions' such as those experienced by eighteenth-century 'chimney sweeping children', but shows this to be symptomatic of a 'general condition':

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[387] Kenneth R. Johnston, 'Blake's Cities: Romantic Forms of Urban Renewal', in *Blakes' Visionary Forms Dramatic*, David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (eds.), (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 444
[388] Williams, *The Country and the city* p.149
[389] Cf. Williams theory of 'emergent' cultural forms in his essay 'Dominant, Residual, and Emergent', in *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 121-27
[390] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p.148.
[391] Sam Wiseman, *The Reimagining of Place in English Modernism* (South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2015), p.105.
[392] Malcolm Bradbury identifies Blake with 'nativist' as opposed to 'cosmopolitan' tradition in 'London: 1890-1920' in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature* (London: Pelican, 1976), pp.175-76; Drew Milne says Blake is part of 'London modernism' in 'Modernist Poetry in the British Isles', *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*, Alex Davis (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 152.

> It is a making of new connections, in the whole order of the city and of the human system it concentrates and embodies. This forcing into consciousness of the suppressed connections is then a new way of seeing the human and social order as a whole.[393]

It is this 'forcing into consciousness' of 'suppressed connections' that renew our sense of the 'social order' that Williams claims is developed by Dickens, whether consciously taking from Blake or not. Though Williams's interpretation might make Blake's 'London' sound difficult to understand, we should remember John Beer's comment that 'London' is Blake's 'least controversial' work, requiring 'no knowledge of his personal vision.'[394]

Williams helps us, moreover, to see a continuity from Blake to Dickens to Woolf. He also writes on Woolf, as mentioned above, focusing on how her novels address the 'discontinuity' and 'atomism' felt by the modern subject living in twentieth-century London.[395] As I have shown, Williams approves of Blake's subversion of a 'simplifying contrast between country and city', but crucially he also states that the Jerusalem hymn 'is not the language of rural retrospect or retreat.'[396] Williams seems implicitly to identify this language of 'retrospect' and 'retreat' in Woolf's writing. He states that Woolf believes the 'discontinuity' and 'atomism' of the modern world can be 'resolved on arrival in the country.'[397] Moreover, in theory 'discontinuity' and 'atomism' undermine a writer's ability to perceive the 'general condition' of capitalism. This is the same ability that Williams praises in Blake's 'London.'

In 'The Pastons and Chaucer' (1925), Woolf reflects on the pastoral convention of imagining the rural countryside to be the space of innocence, and the city the site of vice. 'To the modern poet, with Birmingham, Manchester, and London the size they are, the country is the sanctuary of moral excellence in contrast with the town which is the sink of vice' (E IV, 27).

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[393] Williams, *The Country and the city*, pp. 148-49.
[394] John Beer, *Blake's Humanism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), p. 68.
[395] Williams, *The Country and the city*, p. 241. Cf. Williams' views on modern urban forms of alienation are heavily indebted to Georg Simmel: 'From "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903)'; reprinted in *Modernism: an anthology*, Kolocotroni et al., pp.51-59
[396] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 149.
[397] Ibid, p. 241.

Woolf clearly knows about the classical topos of seeing urban places as corruptible sites of 'vice', rural places as innocent. Expanding on the natural countryside as a 'retreat, the haunt of modesty and virtue, where men go to hide and moralise', she returns to two poets she had discussed in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Wordsworth and Tennyson: 'There is something morbid, as if shrinking from human contact, in the Nature Worship of Wordsworth, still more in the microscopic devotion which Tennyson lavished upon the petals of Roses and the buds of lime trees.' (E IV 27) Woolf hints that Wordsworth and Tennyson's intense 'nature worship' is an attempt to escape the need to attend to the effect of industrialisation on rural landscapes in England.

Similarly, in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf describes her admiration for the Tennysonian method' of writing about nature: 'sifting words until the exact shade and shape of the flower or the cloud had its equivalent phrase' (E II 163). Woolf does not limit this Tennysonian talent to writers. She identifies it too in the 'many wonderful examples of minute skill' demonstrated by 'pre-Raphaelite painters' in painting 'bird's nests and blades of grass' (E II 163). She prefers inaccurate rather than highly obsessive attention to nature. As well as admiring this in Blake, she likes Keats, whom she calls 'more the poet of a season than the poet of a place', claiming he reminds us that 'some of the most beautiful descriptions in the language […] are the least accurate' (E II 162). As I stated in my first chapter, she is refreshed by Blake's lack of belonging to country and city.

In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' Woolf's thoughts on the countryside lead her to feel excited when the 'most exact of poets' proves 'capable of giving us the slip' such as during a 'moment of life or of vision'; 'so his frozen stream or west wind or ruined castle is chosen for the sake of that mood and not for themselves.' (E II 163). For Woolf this flexible, inaccurate response to nature augurs a time when novelists can be 'less fearful of the charge of unreality.' (E II 163). At the conclusion to 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' Woolf describes

Ruskin's 'word-painter's gift', which allowed his response to nature to be 'pure and simple to perfection' (E II 163). She contrasts this to the 'detachable descriptions' of Emily Brontë and Thomas Hardy, who capture the 'rough large outline of the land itself' rather than focusing on the details of a geographic setting. (E II 163). In her journal composed between 1907 and 1908, Woolf is already testing similar ideas, writing of Hardy that: 'It is natural to him to see things always with a sort of rude honesty upon them, as though, at last, they had a chance to protest against the embellishments of the poets.' (PA 387). For Woolf, Hardy and Brontë are similar to Blake because they avoid poetic 'embellishments.'

By 'word-painter's gift' Woolf means the way a writer, like a painter, often visually imitates a landscape. She reuses this phrase in 'The Pastons and Chaucer', saying that Chaucer lacked 'a tithe of the virtuosity in word-painting which is the modern inheritance.' (E IV 27). Yet she does not see this as a weakness in Chaucer. Rather, it means Chaucer responds to nature with less artifice, sensitively perceiving it, as Woolf says, 'with the hardness and freshness of an actual presence' (E IV 28). For Blake nature is seldom a thing in itself but always a means of observing divine and non-human worlds. In 'Auguries of Innocence' he writes in a manner which sensuously engages with physical nature: 'To see a World in a Grain of Sand/ And a heaven in a Wild Flower/ Hold infinity in the palm of your hand/ And Eternity in an hour' (CPPWB N 490).

Similarities between 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' and 'The Pastons and Chaucer' reveal that Woolf's comments on a 'morbid' poetics of 'Nature Worship' in Wordsworth and 'microscopic devotion' in Tennyson are both formulated with reference to Blake's annotated statement on Wordsworth, claiming that 'Natural Objects' deadened his imagination. 'The Pastons and Chaucer' appeared in Woolf's first major essay collection *The Common Reader:*

First Series (1925).[398] Given that Woolf was still interested in her notes on Blake as late as 1940, we can assume she consults them in 1925 when writing 'The Pastons and Chaucer.' In her critical introduction to a transcribed edition of Woolf's notebooks, Brenda R. Silver points out that the notebook in which Woolf recorded Blake's words was part of a body of material Woolf assembled 'over a period of seven years, for her first critical book.'[399] That first book is of course *The Common Reader: First Series*. When Woolf hopes to write a new book of criticism in 1940, her thoughts inevitably return to the excitement of her first book.

5.4.'Mental deities': Blake's view of nature

To discuss Blake's words on Wordsworth informing 'The Pastons and Chaucer' requires that we include Blake alongside Wordsworth so that there are two central Romantic influences on Woolf's writing about nature. In the early twentieth century Wordsworth almost dominates understanding of Romanticism and nature. In Woolf's edition of Wordsworth's literary criticism, for example, Nowell C. Smith writes by way of introduction:

> The whole of our modern attitude towards nature and towards the art of interpreting nature through language has been so largely created by Wordsworth and Coleridge and by later writers, in most respects dissimilar, but all profoundly influenced by these two, such as Shelley and Keats, Ruskin, and Tennyson, Matthew Arnold and Browning, that Wordsworth's polemic is necessarily in part unreal to us except in a historic sense.[400]

Smith's failure to mention Blake would not be acceptable today. In general, Romanticism has become a great deal broader and more complicated since Smith made these comments in 1905.

We must remember that Blake did not easily fit into the Romantic tradition as defined by C. Smith. As Marilyn Butler notes, whereas Blake remains 'angrily pacifist' throughout life, and was stridently opposed to 'government and to all symbols of authority', Wordsworth and

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399 Silver, *Woolf's Reading Notebooks,* p.20.

400 C. Nowell Smith intro, *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism* (London: Henry Frowde, 1905), p.xiv

Coleridge capitulate to 'local loyalties, English places and customs, family and friends.'[401] What is lost therefore in equating Romanticism with Wordsworth and Coleridge is Blake's 'imaginatively' impossible hope, Butler argues, that 'internationalism and universality' will end the historical cycles of 'oppression and revolt.' [402] While critics might follow Jerome J. McGann's example, by asking if Butler is recreating the 'self-definitions' of Romantic poetry and ideology, her interrogation of Wordsworth and Coleridge helps us to see the problems already present in Nowell C. Smith's comments.[403]

When reflecting on Blake in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf implicitly questions the idea, articulated more than a decade earlier by Nowell C. Smith, that Wordsworth and Coleridge apparently dominate 'our modern attitude towards nature.' Smith's writing is more problematic than Woolf's because he limits the Romantic conception of nature to Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, seeing its modern example only in the Victorian writing of Ruskin, Tennyson, and Matthew Arnold. In the passage quoted he focuses on many writers that Woolf engages with in both 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' and 'The Pastons and Chaucer.' He also makes the cryptic comment: 'Wordsworth's polemic is necessarily in part unreal to us except in a historic sense.' What he must mean is that the proliferation of this 'polemic' in many influential Victorian writers makes it hard to question. These Victorian writers still have an authority that modernism will question. Blake represents for Woolf, however, as their near contemporary, a more effective critique of Wordsworth and Coleridge than the Victorians.

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[401] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, & Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 44.
[402] Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, & Reactionaries*, p. 44.
[403] Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.ix

Blake's response to the Wordsworthian view of nature has so often helped us to understand that view itself. For instance, Geoffrey Hartman's experiential account of Wordsworth's development uses the same statement from Blake that interests Woolf:

> When the external stimulus is too clearly present the poet falls mute and corroborates Blake's strongest objection: "Natural Objects always did and now do weaken, deaden, and obliterate Imagination in Me." The poet is forced to discover the autonomy of his imagination, its independence from present joy, from strong outward stimuli—but this discovery, which means a passing of the initiative from nature to imagination, is brought on gradually, mercifully. [404]

According to Hartman, Blake's 'strongest objection' does not make Wordsworth's poetic focus take another direction. Rather it seems to reinforce Wordsworth's belief that the ideal of imaginative 'autonomy' is more important than respect for the 'external stimulus.' Yet Woolf is able to see what Hartman cannot: that Blake's statement complicates the idea that an 'external stimulus' can be neatly separated from poetic subjectivity.

Hartman articulates a dialectic tension in Wordsworth's poetics between an interior subjectivity and the external world. This dialectic is still considered central to Romanticism, even though it may no longer always be at the forefront of scholarly enquiry in the field. Paul De Man's theory asserts Hartman's principles as necessary to Romantic study. De Man defines Romanticism as a historical phase in which 'the term *imagination*' attains more 'importance and complexity' in both poetry and poetic criticism. [405] He argues that it is a 'profound change' to 'the texture of poetic diction', taking on 'the form of a return to a greater concreteness' and 'proliferation of natural objects.'[406] He adds that these developments return to language the 'material substantiality' it has lost.[407] Blake and Wordsworth offer us different ways to define the 'material substantiality' of poetic language that mirrors 'Natural Objects.' De Man is at his clearest when he points out that

[404]Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 41
[405] Paul De Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 1
[406] De Man, *Rhetoric of Romanticism,* pp.1-2
[407] Ibid, pp.1-2

Romanticism, with the 'theme of imagination linked closely to the theme of nature', is a poetics that 'never ceases to be problematic.' [408]

Blake however understands that dynamic tensions between the imagination and nature are ancient. In the illuminated poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (C.1790), he writes:

> The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.
>
> And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity.
>
> Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realise or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began priesthood.
>
> Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.
>
> Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast. (CPPWB MHH 38).

As in his poem 'London', Blake relates urban and rural places. He writes that both cities and natural landscapes are divinely inspired by the 'enlarged & numerous senses' of the ancient poets. He imagines ancient poets – of all traditions and continents we can assume – determining the appropriate 'mental deity' for 'each city & country.' He appears to think this practice can corrupt. What he imagines is something like the use of graven images, when he writes: 'a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realise or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began priesthood.'

Blake clearly understands 'priesthood' to be another object of 'Mental fight.' He therefore invests in the imagination a great deal of power. As David Wagenknecht argues, the Blakean 'pastoral' is a means of understanding that 'the ordinary world of extensive, fallen vision includes the imaginative wherewithal for that world's intensive, visionary transformation.'[409]

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[408] Ibid, pp.1-2.
[409] David Wagenknecht, *Blake's Night: William Blake and the Idea of Pastoral* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1973), p.6

In other words, the 'fallen vision' of Blakean 'priesthood' can be exposed as false by the imagination alone. Reading Blake's words on the country and the city in ancient poetry, it is difficult to conceive how 'mental deities' could be reclaimed from 'priesthood' without a great deal of attention to 'Natural Objects.' This is another of the Romantic parallels between 'nature' and 'imagination' which De Man was right to identify as 'problematic'.

Blake also wants the poetic imagination to be organic rather than mechanistic in its response to 'sensible objects.' His theory of the imagination continues to be worth deciphering, especially with reference to a classic study of Romanticism by M.H. Abrams: *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953). Abrams identifies 'two common and antithetic metaphors of mind' that are central to Romantic poetics and criticism. These are, on the one hand, the metaphor of 'mind' as 'reflector of external objects.' On the other, the 'mind' as 'radiant projector which makes a contribution to the objects it perceives.'[410] Blake's ideal imagination is closer to the organic metaphor of the lamp, rather than the mechanistic mirror. He expects the poetic imagination to be 'a contribution to the objects it perceives.' The Romantic lamp is conceptualised as active, the mirror passive.

Although Blake thinks the poetic imagination able to transform the natural landscape, using highly religious and theological language in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, there are secular ways to interpret his remarks. As Jonathan Bate notes, there was a 'Romantic critique of the Enlightenment's aspiration to master the natural world and set all things to work for the benefit of human commerce.'[411] Since the eighteenth century witnesses increasing

[410]Abrams, 'Preface', *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. viii.
[411] Jonathan Bate, 'Foreword', to *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* Laurence Coupe (ed.), (London: Routledge, 2000), p.xvii. This volume includes an essay on Woolf by Carol H. Cantrell, 'The Flesh of the World: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*', pp.275-81.

industrialisation and therefore the exploitation of natural resources, eco-critical readings of Blake's poetic perspective on the natural world make sense.

Like Blake, Woolf believes the artist is responsible for their imaginative creations, but her overall view is secular. She views objects in the natural world through a philosophical attempt to deconstruct the notion of the transcendent authorial genius. In her autobiographical *Sketch of the Past* (1939), Woolf remembers long periods of 'cotton wool' and 'non-being' in her childhood, but also moments of aesthetic realisation that were inspiring, such as this one which took place 'in the garden at St Ives':

> I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; "That is the whole", I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later. (MB 84).

With this image that is 'part earth; part flower', Woolf reflects on the Romantic trope of wholistic unity, thus exploring the Blakean question of how the mind ought to categorise natural objects. Like Blake, Woolf does not want these images to become part of a system of philosophy.

To resist systematised philosophy Woolf articulates a personal philosophical view of the artist and of the artist in the historical canon:

> I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together. […] from this I reach what I might call a philosophy; […] that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly, and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock. (MB 85).

Here we see Woolf's highly secular perspective. She writes 'emphatically there is no God.' 'Some real things behind appearances' suggests the transcendence of the Romantic sublime. Yet Woolf treats this sublime category as merely the starting point for philosophy, reducing it to a 'token' of intense epiphanic 'revelation' that needs to be translated: 'I make it real by putting it into words.' Woolf also deconstructs the transcendent authority of Beethoven and Shakespeare, preferring to emphasize community: 'we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself.' The idealised, transcendent individual artist is therefore exposed as a mortal means of replacing the patriarchal figure of God. Woolf resists Blakean 'mental deities' by preventing the genius of the individual great artist from being deified and thus beyond critique.

5.5. 'Wood is a pleasant to thing think about': Dora Carrington's and William Blake's wood prints

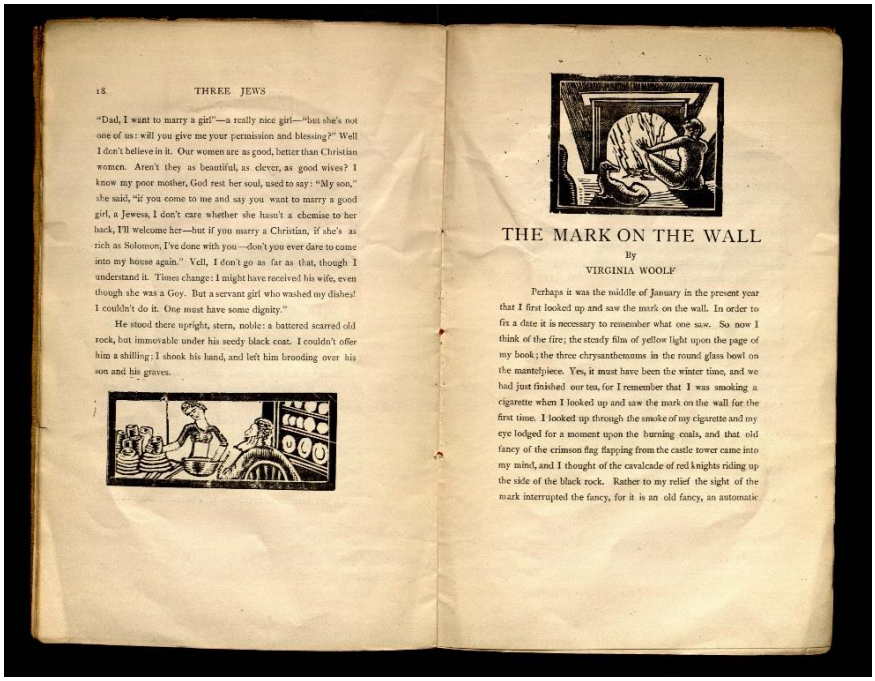
The material of this subsection is essential to my argument for which reason it is excerpted partly from an article in which I concluded Dora Carrington took Blake's work as an inspiration for her simple approach to illustrating Leonard and Virginia's short stories.[412] In the first year of research for my thesis, I consulted Blake's wood engravings in the British Museum. These were wood engraved illustrations for a volume known as Thornton's Virgil, produced by Dr Robert John Thornton to teach Latin Verse.[413] On 25 July 1917, Dora Carrington mentioned in a letter that she visited the British Museum print room to examine the 'Italian woodcuts.'[414] The British Museum bought Blake's wood engravings in 1863,

[412] See Michael Black '"Wood is a pleasant thing to think about": William Blake and the Hand printed books of the Hogarth Press', in *Virginia Woolf and the World of Books,* pp. 40-50.

[413] See William Blake, with contributions from Dr Robert Thornton and John Linnell, *The wood engravings of William Blake: seventeen subjects commissioned by Dr Robert Thornton for his Virgil of 1821 newly printed in 1977 from the original blocks now in the British Museum* (England: Goldmark, 2015).

[414]Dora Carrington, *Carrington: Letters and Extracts from her Diaries*. David Garnett (ed and intro.) (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p.75

which might also have interested Carrington.[415] Carrington also made pastoral images such as the undated woodcut *Shepherd in Arcadia*.[416] Comparison between Carrington's illustrations to *Two Stories*, and Blake's wood engravings reveals that both use a simple, primitive style:



18 THREE JEWS

"Dad, I want to marry a girl"—a really nice girl—"but she's not one of us: will you give me your permission and blessing?" Well I don't believe in it. Our women are as good, better than Christian women. Aren't they as beautiful, as clever, as good wives? I know my poor mother, God rest her soul, used to say: "My son," she said, "if you come to me and say you want to marry a good girl, a Jewess, I don't care whether she hasn't a chemise to her back, I'll welcome her—but if you marry a Christian, if she's as rich as Solomon, I've done with you—don't you ever dare to come into my house again." Well, I don't go as far as that, though I understand it. Times change: I might have received his wife, even though she was a Goy. But a servant girl who washed my dishes! I couldn't do it. One must have some dignity."

He stood there upright, stern, noble: a battered scarred old rock, but immovable under his seedy black coat. I couldn't offer him a shilling: I shook his hand, and left him brooding over his son and his graves.

THE MARK ON THE WALL

By

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Perhaps it was the middle of January in the present year that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember what one saw. So now I think of the fire; the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the winter time, and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock. Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic

Figure 8: Dora Carrington's woodcut designs for *Two Stories* (1917). Courtesy of St Andrews University Library special collections.

Figure 9: Blake's wood engraved design for *Thornton's Virgil*. 1821. Permission of the Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow.

[415] As stated in the British Museum online catalogue: book; print; illustrated book | British Museum

[416] For a reproduction, see Jeremy Greenwood, (ed.) Judith Collins (intro), *Omega cuts*, (Woodbridge: the Woodlea press, 1998).

Carrington's woodcuts for *Two Stories*, measures approximately 34 by 81 mm, very close in size to Blake's plate in figure nine which is about 35 by 84mm. Carrington also worked in Roger Fry's Omega workshop, where Fry, as he writes in a 1913 Prospectus for the artefacts of the workshop, encouraged 'artist's handling' over 'mechanical reproduction.'[417] Both Carrington and Blake make the autographic quality of the marks they make on the wood perceptible in the print.

Woolf's short story 'The Mark on the Wall', which she included in *Two Stories*, is a pastoral distortion of nature, deflating the sublime view of nature through a series of puns. At the end of the story, the speaker realises that instead of a nail or piece of dirt: 'Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail.' (CSF 89). As Dean Baldwin writes this 'mark on the wall' that preoccupies the speaker is 'something real': the 'point from which the imagination may move, as it does to a reflection on the life of wood and the trees from which wood comes.'[418]

We know Woolf associates Blake with the pastoral poetic genre, known for allegorical treatment of nature, rather than accurate description of agriculture and ecology. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Section 1.1, in a subsection on Woolf's 1917 essay that comments on Blake, 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', her title of this same essay is a quotation from Virgil, one of the foremost pastoral poets. However, Woolf is not quoting from Virgil's pastoral *Eclogues*, but from his *Georgics*, a form that contrasts with the urbane subjects discussed by Virgil's sophisticated figures, Meliboeus and Tityrus, in the *Eclogues*. In contrast to pastoral which idealises rural life for the benefit of city-dwellers, Georgic is often not allegorical but rather intended to be a manual for agricultural expertise. Below is Virgil's original Latin poetry with English translation:

> sin; has ne possim naturae accedere partis,/frigidus obstiterit circum praecordia sanguis, rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes,/*flumina amem silvasque* inglorius.-But if the chill blood about my heart bar me from reaching those realms of

[417]Roger Fry, "Prospectus for the Omega Workshops' (1913), reproduced in *A Roger Fry Reader*, Christopher Reed (ed.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 199
[418] Dean Baldwin, *Virginia Woolf: A Study of the Short Fiction*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), pp. 14.

> nature, let my delight be the country, and the running streams amid the dells-may I love the waters and woods, though I be unknown to fame.[419]

In 'The Mark on the Wall', such a harmonious view of nature is deflated when the speaker draws on objects from the natural world for 'proof of some existence other than ours':

> That is what one wants to be sure of…Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow; and we don't know how they grow. For years and years, they grow without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers-all things one likes to think about. (CSF. 88).

Woolf's elliptical lacuna indicates a gap between the desire for certainty about the natural world and the organic recurrence of one of its central symbols in poetry, the tree, shows that she is both sceptical of and interested in the reciprocity between divinities and the natural world expressed by Blake's 'mental deities' discussed in the previous section on the Blakean conception of nature in ancient poetry.

5.6. Blake's 'mind-forg'd manacles' in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

I argued at the start of this chapter that Blake's distance from institutionalised heritage seems only to make him more radical. The same might be said about Blake's general absence from the canon in the early twentieth century. Though many groups of artists consider him a genius, critics such as T.S. Eliot are reluctant to give Blake the transcendent position of a Dante, Shakespeare, or Beethoven. As I mention in Chapter One, in one of the first reviews of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Richard Hughes suggests that Septimus Warren Smith is a Blakean figure of the visionary outsider. Hughes sees that like Blake, Septimus has heightened, visionary perception. In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', Woolf – like Blake – makes Septimus oblivious to the exact appearance of his immediate surroundings.

Septimus is still recovering from his traumatising experience as a soldier during the Great War. His wife Lucrezia Warren Smith is tasked with his care, burdened by the expectation to

[419] Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI* trans, p. 170-71

help him return to being able to 'notice real things' and to 'take an interest in things outside himself' (MD 18). However, Septimus remains inclined to see himself as at the centre of events. In his mind, Woolf writes, he thinks all passing impressions are 'signalling to me'. He cannot help imagining patterns of 'exquisite beauty' that no one else in London perceives in fleeting everyday life:

> And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with lack branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion— (MD 19).

Septimus ambitiously tries to understand London in all its complexity. He sees himself partly as a visionary, perceiving the 'new religion' that constitutes the 'pattern' of the natural world. This 'pattern' and 'new religion' also exemplifies a quality of *Mrs Dalloway* noticed by Peter Penda who writes that Woolf's combinations of 'cityscapes and mindscapes' make the novel's treatment of urban modernity both 'spiritual and material.'[420] Woolf's use of rural and natural imagery to describe the city shows she sees the city and country as intimately related.

Woolf's Septimus resembles the lyric speaker of Blake's 'London' because he is trying to express the collective nature of suffering in the vast metropolis. From its first lines, Blake's poem is about how collective suffering could unite citizens in eighteenth-century London:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street,
> Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
> And mark in every face I meet
> Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
>
> In every cry of every Man,
> In every infants cry of fear,
> In every voice: in every ban,

[420] On this see Peter Penda, 'Politicising Cityscape: London in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*', *The Literary London Journal*, Vol. 10. No. 1 (Spring 2013).

The mind-forg'd manacles I hear (CPPWB SIE 26-27).

Blake's 'London' hopes to challenge the alienating conditions of capitalism. Both Woolf and Blake examine London in relation to its complex social structure, meaning that voice is given to marginalised perspectives on the city. It is a visionary, lyrical and challenging perspective of London, both objective and eccentric. Yet while Septimus is alert to forms of suffering and mental slavery as he walks through London, he is unable to synthesize this into a Blakean critique of class and capital in London. Richard Hughes unfairly calls Septimus a 'lunatic', which is too dismissive, but it would also be wrong to say Septimus's and Blake's visionary perceptions are identical.

Septimus lacks any means to mediate his perception, whereas Blake is able to make the perception and witnessing of 'mind-forg'd manacles' central to the lyric speaker's traversing of public space in eighteenth-century mercantile London. These 'mind-forg'd manacles' are integral to his structural critique of capitalism. They express the condition, both emotional and psychological, of the body politic. Blake sees this condition as a collective mental enslavement that affects those in power as much as society's marginalised victims. 'Mind-forg'd manacles' are spectral. They haunt Blake's London; their presence can be heard and measured, observed by the mind, and felt by the body. They also expose private business and finance exploiting public streets, in the image of the 'charter'd street' and 'charter'd Thames.'

In *Mrs Dalloway*, there is also an attempt to capture the collective suffering experienced by the body politic in London. This collective suffering is elegiac. Like Eliot in *The Waste Land*, Woolf mourns the soldiers who died in the Great War. I show in Chapter Three that Ezra Pound draws T.S. Eliot's attention to Blake, in the margin of a passage of *The Waste Land*, where Eliot writes: 'I had not thought death had undone so many.' Woolf opens *Mrs Dalloway* with reflections of the protagonist Clarissa Dalloway on earlier moments in her

life, full of love affairs, especially on holiday in the village of Bourton. These reflections build up to an elegiac quotation of the dirge from Shakespeare's late play *Cymbeline*:

> What was she trying to recover? What image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open:
>
> > Fear no more the heat o' the sun
> > Nor the furious winter's rages.
>
> This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance, a perfectly upright and stoical bearing. (MD 7).

This 'upright and stoical bearing' is exactly what the shell-shocked soldier Septimus Smith refuses as he traverses public space in London. It represents a kind of conformity that his traumatic experience and world view cannot follow. The forms of mourning and expressing elegiac feeling acceptable in public make no sense to Septimus. Septimus's death at the end of *Mrs Dalloway* increases Clarissa's sense of needing to belong to a social milieu characterised by 'stoical bearing' from which she is also alienated. In the closing scene of the novel, a party Clarissa has been planning throughout the day of the novel, Clarissa hears of Septimus's suicide, and the news seems almost to reassure her. As Howard Harper writes, Clarissa and Septimus possess 'opposite adaptations to the world', unable to communicate with one another.[421] Septimus is a visionary, Clarissa perhaps more of a realist, but Clarissa seems more distanced from the modern metropolis. As Miroslave Beker writes 'the overriding effect of the city on Septimus is that of a megalopolis.'[422]

Septimus is by no means the only Blakean voice in *Mrs Dalloway.* Rather than Clarissa, he more closely resembles a figure in the novel that he is not usually compared to, the figure Woolf describes as a 'battered woman' whose song is heard by Peter Walsh, Septimus, and

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[421] Howard Harper, *Between Language and Silence, The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 127.
[422] Miroslave Beker, 'London as Principle of Structure in Mrs Dalloway', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 18.3 (Autumn 1972), 375-8 (383).

Lucrezia, near Regent's Park underground station. As Woolf's description of the woman's song makes clear, it is 'without direction, vigour, beginning or end' and has 'an absence of all human meaning':

> ee um fah um so
>
> foo swee too eem oo-
>
> the voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth; which issued, just opposite Regent's Park Tube Station, from a tall quivering shape, like a funnel, like a rusty pump, like a wind-beaten tree forever barren of leaves which lets the wind run up and down its branches singing
>
> ee um fah um so
>
> foo swee too eem oo-
>
> and rocks and creaks and moans in the eternal breeze (MD 73-74).

The source of this song, 'ee um fah um so/foo swee too eem oo', has been the object of speculation. According to Angela Frattarola, Woolf creates the song of this 'battered woman' through 'found sound', an 'original musical composition' translated from the noises of 'the real world such as sirens, rain, cars, street conversations', adding that the song's sound in London is positive because it gives Peter and Rezia 'shared experience.'[423] By contrast, taking an empirical approach, J. Hillis Miller argues that the song is Woolf's transposed variation of Richard Strauss's 1885 song 'Allerseelen.'[424] Again Woolf uses pastoral imagery, comparing the sound to 'a wind-beaten tree forever barren of leaves which lets the wind run up and down its branches singing.'

Woolf's 'found sound' makes urban capitalist alienation embodied and material which means it echoes Blake's 'mind-forg'd manacles.' Woolf's song of 'no age or sex' attempts to give form to the collective experience of elegiac trauma in early twentieth-century London. What

[423] Angela Frattarola, 'Listening for "found sound" samples in the novels of Virginia Woolf, *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 11 (2005), 133-159 (150)
[424] See J. Hillis Miller, 'Mrs Dalloway: Repetition as the Raising of the Dead', *in Critical Essays on Virginia Woolf*, Morris Beja (ed.) (Boston: MA: G.K. 1985), p. 63.

makes this song perhaps unlike the expression of suffering in Blake's poem 'London' is its disembodiment. It does not seem initially to be part of London's social fabric. Its ancient, transhistorical, androgynous, anonymous characteristics make the figure of the 'battered woman' comparable to Woolf's late creation 'Anon.' Both are in contrast to the transcendent genius such as Beethoven or Shakespeare. Both this 'battered woman' and 'Anon' represent the marginalised artist. The song lyrics that are like echolalia, 'ee um fah um so' and 'nin crot & pulley', are similarly playful.

Woolf's 'battered woman' is excluded from the social scene in which she is present: 'the pavement was crowded with bustling middle-class people.' John Carey takes issue with this detail, unjustly dismissing this scene because he thinks a 'beggar' is deprived of their 'social reality.'[425] Carey forgets that 'ee um fah um so' attempts to make material a collective elegiac experience within London's body politic. He is more obsessed than is warranted by the 'social reality' of Woolf's prose. He forgets what Anne Lovering Rounds can see, namely that with 'ee um fah um so' Woolf 'privileges sound before its agent.'[426] It does not necessarily matter which individual in London is making this sound because it expresses a collective and communal emotional and psychological complex. Woolf writes that 'Peter Walsh couldn't help giving the poor creature a coin as he stepped into his taxi.' And similarly Rezia feels pity towards this 'poor old woman' and 'poor old wretch'. But the 'battered woman' is not deprived of 'social reality', she is simply unable to find place in a London dominated by the middle and upper-middle classes.

[425] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 37
[426] Anne Lovering Rounds, 'Dissolves in *Mrs Dalloway*: The Soundscape of a Novel', *Literary Imagination*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (March 2011), 58-70 (64)

5.7. Woolf, Blake and the modern urban flâneur/ flâneuse

In a 1960 study of Woolf and London, Dorothy Brewster writes that in Woolf's London, at 'any moment one may be reminded of the long past of the city by some association or image.'[427] For example the 'battered woman' seems to conjure up an image of London as prehistoric, with echoes of 'the age of tusk or mammoth.' (MD 74). Both Woolf and Blake write about London by trying to balance their sense of London's modernity with a sensitivity to its ancient, Roman origins. This is not evident from my primary example in this chapter, Blake's poem 'London', but Blake does write about London elsewhere, taking an interest in London's twofold mythic status, as a future Jerusalem, but also as an ancient place.

Though it is reasonable to suggest Dickens as a modern bridge between Woolf and Blake 's respective engagements with London, it is also important to think about Baudelaire's modern perspective on the metropolis of nineteenth-century Paris. It is for this reason that the title of my chapter does not mention London, even though London is central to the subject of how Woolf and Blake imagine the country and the modern city. Baudelaire is important to the modernist city because he celebrates the urban privilege of the *flâneur,* the emblem of Paris as the leading modern metropolis, made famous by Baudelaire's essay on the painter Constantin Guys.[428] The *flâneur* also represents an industrialised European bourgeoisie that did not exist in Blake's eighteenth-century London on the same scale as it did in the nineteenth-century metropolis. Though there are characters in Woolf's novels that traverse public space, like the *flâneuse* and *flâneur,* Vara Neverow reminds us that freely moving through space informs how Woolf unites country and city in domestic space. Commenting on Woolf's short story 'The Mark on the Wall', Neverow identifies in the speaker's thoughts a

[427] Dorothy Brewster, *Virginia Woolf's London* (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1960), p. 11
[428] See Charles Baudelaire, 'From "The Painter of Modern Life" 1859-60'; reprinted in *Modernism: an anthology*, Kolocotroni et al, pp. 102-09.

form of 'mental *flânerie* via random thinking and obsessively scopic fascination regarding a small mysterious spot.'[429]

In 1985 Janet Wolff argues that the flaneur is a celebration of a privileged male access to the masculine public sphere, thereby provoking the question of the place of the *flâneuse* in the modern 'public world of work, politics and city life', which were all, 'areas from which women were excluded, or in which they were practically invisible.'[430] Since then there have been numerous attempts from art historians and literary critics to assert the importance of the *flâneuse* in theories of urban modernity.[431] Often such studies have classically referred to the 'invisible *flâneuse',* but this label is already dated. Lauren Elkin, for example, has shown that many women artists, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, whether writers, painters or filmmakers, use walking in the city as part of their creative practice, which clearly earns them the title *flâneuse.*[432]

Though we have established, via Raymond Williams, that Blake's lyric speaker represents a precedent for Dickens's socially conscientious and critical engagement with London, it is harder to claim continuity between Blake and Baudelaire. Rather than socially conscientious, Baudelaire's *flâneur* is distant, but on the other hand the *flâneur* also represents leisured idleness potentially celebrated by Woolf's 'Mental fight', that ideal of *otium* discussed in the previous chapter. While I am inclined to maintain some distance between Baudelaire and Dickens, Marshall Berman claims that both possess 'instinctive feeling' for 'the intimate

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[429] Vara Neverow, 'Virginia Woolf and City Aesthetics', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the arts* Maggie Humm (ed.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.99. See also Morag Shiach, 'Modernism, the City and the "Domestic Interior", *Home Cultures*, 2:3 (Nov. 2005), 251-267.

[430] Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 2 No. 3 (1985), 37-46.

[431] See the essay collection edited by Arun D'Souza and Tom McDonough, *The invisible flâneuse?: gender, public space, and visual culture in nineteenth-century Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

[432] Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (London: Vintage, 2017).

unity of the modern self and the modern environment.'[433] As established earlier in this chapter, Raymond Williams believes that the modern urban subject is characterised by 'atomism' and 'discontinuity.' I have shown that Woolf and Blake are never naïve enough to entirely believe that idealised rural landscapes could resolve this crisis of the modern subject.

One privilege of the *flâneur* is their ability to observe the 'atomism' and 'discontinuity' of modern life, without being negatively affected by it. In *Mrs Dalloway,* this 'atomism' and 'discontinuity' have the gravest impact on Septimus Smith and the 'battered woman.' Neither of these figures can keep pace with modernity. Neither resemble the new kinds of subject emerging in the metropolis, such as the *flâneur, flâneuse,* or indeed the new woman. Septimus is an extreme example of victim of the traumatic Great War; the 'battered woman' is a strange conflation of transhistorical archetype and actual person.

While my focus throughout this chapter has been on the political and theological points of continuity between Woolf and Blake 's writing on the country and the city, that relationship is also aesthetic. As Matthew Sangster points out, Blake developed an 'idiosyncratic kind of magical thinking about London' comparable to modernist 'techniques of fragmentation and bricolage'[434] Having identified these similarities, Sangster adds: 'The techniques developed through this tradition have created means for suggesting that London is an infinite canvas and for valorising this image.'[435] Such an expansive view of London is achieved by Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* through a panoramic, cinematic treatment of public space and through both stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse. Yet Woolf's novel is not panoramic in the manner of a nineteenth-century realist novel. It focuses on a singular, fragmentary day in

[433] Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air:The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1982), p. 132.
[434] Matthew Sangster, 'Coherence and Inclusion in the Life Writing of Romantic Period London', *Life Writing*, Vol. 14 No 2 (2017), 141-153 (143)
[435] Sangster, 'Coherence and Inclusion in the Life Writing of Romantic Period London', (143).

early twentieth-century London. Blake achieves a similar impression of London, but through an intensified lyrical reaction, rather than a panoramic depiction of the city.

While throughout this chapter I have focused on suffering within the body politic depicted by Woolf and Blake, there are joyful responses to London in *Mrs Dalloway*. It would be wrong to think Woolf sees London through two extremes, her 'only patriotism' on the one hand, and the need for 'Mental fight' on the other. There is another Blakean moment, for example, when Clarissa first hears Big Ben:

> Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh […] the most dejected of miseries (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June. (MD 2).

This is a representation of London through modernist 'fragmentation and bricolage.' Woolf makes fragmentary impressions of the city construct it, 'building it round one' and 'creating it every moment afresh.' She allows perception and consciousness to co-create the city. Her 'leaden circles dissolved in the air' are another example of 'found sound', become a refrain in the novel, unifying London's body politic. They echo Blake's 'mind-forg'd manacles' because they express a deflation of political optimism and agency, since the Houses of Parliament are powerless to put an end to 'the most dejected of miseries.' There is also vitalism in the busy life of the city, which Woolf deconstructs. She does so most concisely and clearly in her visionary novel *The Waves*, when the six voices in the novel move to London to go to school, finding the city shapeless: 'London crumbles. London heaves and surges. There is a bristling of chimneys and towers. There a white church; there a mast

among the spires.' (W 17). In addition, the Blakean polarity of innocence and experience resonates in *The Waves.*

The conclusions of this chapter develop those of Chapter Four. I have shown that Blake's category of 'mental deities', essential to understanding how he links country and city, is necessarily part of his 'Mental fight.' Similarly, Woolf's thoughts about nature in *Sketch of the Past*, also concern a form of critique, in so far as Woolf tries to deconstruct the transcendent figure of the author. However, whereas in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake adopts a highly original position on the poetic relation between country and city, we have seen that in 'The Pastons and Chaucer' Woolf's is sometimes closer to the classical view of the innocent countryside and vicious city. Yet both Woolf and Blake are part of the pastoral tradition, and both want to recreate a visual and verbal image of London while also being representational. The next chapter builds on Woolf's and Blake's dynamic resistance to 'mental deities', by examining one of the most prominent examples of the transcendent artistic genius, who was very significant to Woolf and Blake, the poet John Milton.

6: Woolf, Blake, and ‘Milton’s bogey’

The purpose of this chapter is to consider how both Woolf and Blake respond to Milton and his influence. While Woolf’s view of Milton is feminist, Blake’s is often intensely concerned with theological questions, but he was also interested in Milton’s treatment of gender. Both Blake and Woolf deconstruct and challenge Milton’s overbearing prominence in the poetic canon. I pointed out in my first chapter that in *The Madwoman in the Attic,* Gilbert and Gubar argue that Blake’s response to Milton might have enabled a nineteenth-century feminist treatment of Milton. I will argue that Blake’s response to Milton is like Woolf’s, and that Blake on Milton prefigures Woolf on Milton.

In Chapter Four I began by aiming to define what ‘Mental fight’ means to Woolf and Blake respectively. I now need to discuss what ‘Milton’s’ Bogey’ means to Woolf, and then its relevance to Blake. Although I treated the authors sequentially in Chapter Four, I have found it useful here to introduce some general critical and theoretical context before discussing Blake on ‘Milton’s bogey.’ By doing so this chapter adds explicitly detailed commentary on Woolf and Blake’s responses to Milton which were implicitly indicated, though not fully formulated, by Gilbert and Gubar.

6.1. Woolf on ‘Milton’s Bogey’

Woolf mentions ‘Milton’s Bogey’ in one of the closing sentences of *A Room of One’s Own*:

> For my belief is that if we live another century or so – I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals – and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton’s bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (AROO 171-72).

According to the *OED* bogey can mean, 'evil one, the devil', a 'bogle or goblin; a person much dreaded.'[436] 'Milton's Bogey' could refer to Milton's objects of dread, but it also refers to the dread that Milton inspires in other writers. 'Shakespeare's sister' refers to Judith Shakespeare, Woolf's fictionalised, counterfactual imagining of William Shakespeare's genius sister. Earlier in the essay Woolf imagines the dead Judith Shakespeare buried in obscurity in South London, her presence and her potential continuing to be manifest in early twentieth-century generations.

Like 'Anon', Judith Shakespeare represents a collective artistic voice that has for centuries been undermined partly by 'Milton's Bogey.' Woolf implicitly suggests Judith Shakespeare is 'Milton's Bogey.' A communitarian, feminist writing practice is incompatible with Milton's poetry but also with what Milton represents: only when the transcendent presence of the individual great artist, poet, or painter, is relinquished, can 'Milton's Bogey' cease to be a problem. Yet it also remains hard to say exactly what Woolf means by 'Milton's bogey.' Woolf writes that it obscures the 'view' of both 'reality' and 'the world of men and women.' In her 1918 diary, in her first major engagement with Milton, reflecting on his most famous poem *Paradise Lost,* Woolf is already interested in Milton and the everyday life of 'men and women', the same subject she returns to in *A Room of One's Own*.

In this 1918 diary entry, Woolf is astonished by 'the extreme difference between this poem and any other.' She explains this 'extreme difference' with reference to the poem's 'sublime aloofness and impersonality of the emotion':

> The substance of Milton is all made of wonderful, beautiful, and masterly description of angels' bodies, battles, flights, dwelling places. He deals in horror and immensity and squalor and sublimity but never in the passions of the human heart. Has any poem ever let in so little light upon one's own joys and sorrows? I get no help in judging life; I scarcely feel that Milton lived or knew men and women; except for the peevish personalities about marriage and the woman's duties. He was the first of the masculinists, but his disparagement rises from his own ill luck and

[436] "bogy | bogey, n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2021. Web. 2 November 2021.

> seems even a spiteful last word in his domestic quarrels. But how smooth, how strong and elaborate it all is! What poetry! I can conceive that even Shakespeare after this would seem a little troubled, personal, hot and imperfect. I can conceive that this is the essence, of which almost all other poetry is the dilution. The inexpressible fineness of the style, in which shade after shade is perceptible, would alone keep one gazing into it, long after the surface business in progress has been despatched. Deep down one catches still further combinations, rejections, felicities and masteries. Moreover, though there is nothing like Lady Macbeth's terror or Hamlet's cry, no pity or sympathy or intuition, the figures are majestic; in them is summed up much of what men thought of our place in the universe, of our duty to God, our religion. (D I 191-92).

Woolf thinks Shakespeare is more sensitive to the everyday life of 'men and women' than Milton. Even though Lady Macbeth and Hamlet are extreme and exaggerated figures, Woolf finds in their experience and speech, forms of 'pity or sympathy or intuition' that are unavailable in Milton's poetry.

There are therefore deliberate contradictions in Woolf's interpretation of *Paradise Lost*. On the one hand she writes that Milton's 'sublime aloofness' makes 'even Shakespeare' come to seem 'troubled, personal, hot and imperfect.' On the other, it seems that Milton's poetry tells nothing about 'men and women; except for the peevish personalities about marriage and the woman's duties', meaning that Milton's poetry is too 'personal, hot and imperfect.' In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf explicitly praises the impersonality achieved by Shakespeare. She contrasts Milton and Shakespeare, stating: 'we know so little of Shakespeare' because his 'grudges and spites and antipathies are hidden from us.' (AROO 47). Whereas T.S. Eliot dismisses Milton for causing a poetic 'dissociation of sensibility', Woolf questions the excess of Milton's person, 'spiteful' feelings about 'domestic quarrels.' This reminds us that artistic impersonality is not the privileged hallmark of Eliot and Pound's modernism. For Woolf it is also an important standard for writing.

Though Woolf recognizes Milton has been idealised to a similar extent to Beethoven and Shakespeare (her two examples of the transcendent artist in *Sketch of the Past*), her problem with Milton begins with his being 'first of the masculinists.' This means his poetry struggles

to move beyond 'disparagement' and always trying to have a 'spiteful last word.' According to Woolf, Milton is strongest in poetically creating heavens and hells full of 'angels' bodies, battles, flights', but this is at the expense of 'the passions of the human heart', meaning his poetry will never 'let in' the needed 'light upon one's own joys and sorrows'. On the one hand *Paradise lost*, by boldly trying 'to justify ways of god to men', comes to represent 'much of what men thought of our place in the universe, of our duty to God, our religion.' On the other, Woolf seeks an alternative to traditional philosophical approaches based on the transcendence of 'duty', 'God' and 'religion.' As she writes *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf thinks Judith Shakespeare will lead this new direction in western poetry and philosophy.

Among the Romantics, it is Keats as well as Blake, whom Woolf follows in taking personal issue with Milton. Like Woolf, Keats is very impressed by Milton. In his marginalia to *Paradise Lost*, Keats writes that Milton's brilliant 'argument' was his 'by 'a sort of birthright.'[437] Yet he also shares Woolf's sense that Milton's ability was overwhelming and dominating. In a letter of 1819, Keats writes of Milton: 'Life to him would be death to me.'[438] Gilbert and Gubar hear 'echoes' of Keats's statement about Milton in the tenor of Woolf's 'speaking of her father years after his death.'[439] They are referring to Woolf's reflections in 1928 on the day that would have been her father's ninety-sixth birthday: 'His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books, inconceivable. I used to think of him & mother daily, but writing The Lighthouse, laid them in my mind' (D III 208). Both Keats and Woolf use hyperbolic language. Both insist on the need for independence from a patriarchal figure in their imagined literary past, but also betray

[437]John Keats *The Major Works* Elizabeth Cook (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 336.
[438] Keats, *The Major Works*, p.515.
[439] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman*, p. 191.

intimacy with that past figure. 'Milton's Bogey' is an opaque expression of Milton's symbolic tendency to deny other writers the possibilities of significance and achievement.

If Milton is 'first of the masculinists', Woolf might also see him as the model for subsequent masculine writers, her father included. In 'Impressions of Sir Leslie Stephen' (1906), Woolf praises her father's ability to recite whole poems from memory, often absorbing every line 'unconsciously from a single reading':

> He had long ago acquired all the most famous poems of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Keats, and Matthew Arnold, among moderns. Milton of old writers was the one he knew best; he specially loved the 'Ode on the Nativity', which he said to us regularly on Christmas night. […] if he could not speak from memory he generally refused to recite at all. His recitation, or whatever it may be called, gained immensely from this fact, for as he lay back in his chair and spoke the beautiful words with closed eyes, we felt that he was speaking not merely the words of Tennyson or Wordsworth but what he himself felt and knew. Thus many of the great English poems now seem to me inseparable from my father; I hear in them not only his voice, but in some sort his teaching and belief. (E I 128-29)[440]

Though Woolf foregrounds Leslie Stephen's teaching her and her siblings about poetry, Katherine C. Hill argues that it was by recommending model writers for biography and history that Leslie Stephen was significant in Woolf's literary training.[441] Woolf respects her father's 'teaching and belief' but prefers to access it via 'the great English poems' that he approved. Blake is not mentioned as part of Stephen's 'teaching and belief' which may be because Blake and Stephen represent different traditions. Noel Annan identifies Stephen as a 'minor' part of 'the British empirical school that descends from Locke through Hume and John Stuart Mill to Russell.'[442] Blake cannot be classified as an empiricist.

In the 1928 diary entry about her father, Woolf is anxious about her father as a literary colleague. She returns to this in *Sketch of the Past* (1939), reflecting that though she has no

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[440] Woolf's essay was included in a biography of Leslie Stephen by F.W. Maitland, *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London: Duckworth & Co, 1906).
[441]Katherine C. Hill, 'Virginia Woolf and Leslie Stephen: History and Literary Revolution' *PMLA*, Vol. 93 No. 3 (May 1981), 351-362 (353)
[442] Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to his Time* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp.I-II

'natural taste' for her father's writing, occasionally 'just as a dog takes a bite of grass, I take a bite of him medicinally' (MB 123). In small amounts, she can admire the 'courage' and 'simplicity' of his prose that always has 'neglect of appearances' (MB 123). When criticizing her father, Woolf identifies a similar excess of negative personal feeling that she also recognizes in Milton. She remembers that she and the other Stephen family children were more often exposed than anyone else to 'the tyrant father': 'the exacting, the violent, the histrionic, the demonstrative, the self-centred, the self-pitying, the deaf, the appealing, the alternately loved and hated father – that dominated me then.' (MB 123). Both 'Milton's Bogey' and the 'tyrant father' are troubling, dominant presences which are not easily overcome.

When imagining Judith Shakespeare challenging the oppressive presence of 'Milton's Bogey', Woolf engages with an earlier passage in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf mentions Milton when trying to shift away from mentally enslaving negative feelings such as 'fear and bitterness', so that it becomes possible to embrace the 'freedom to think of things in themselves' (AROO 32). The immediate cause of this new 'freedom' is an inheritance from a recently deceased aunt who leaves an annual income of five hundred pounds. Woolf then explains that Milton is an impediment to 'freedom to think of things in themselves': 'Indeed my aunt's legacy unveiled the sky to me, and substituted for the large and imposing figure of a gentleman, which Milton recommended for my perpetual adoration, a view of the open sky.' (AROO 45)

In two visual images Blake presents Milton as deserving of 'perpetual adoration.' He makes visual images about Milton that are comparable to Woolf's description *in A Room of One's*

Own. Blake receives a commission from William Hayley to decorate his library.[443] In his portrait of Milton, commissioned to decorate the library of William Hayley, Blake makes Milton 'large and imposing', presenting him as a poet worthy of 'perpetual adoration':

Figure 10: 'John Milton' by William Blake. (c.1800-1803). Pen and Ink and Tempera on canvas. ©Manchester City Art Gallery.

Another 'imposing' masculine figure that Blake associates with Milton is the Adam of *Paradise Lost*, depicted on the title plate of Blake's *Milton*:

Figure 11: *MILTON a Poem in 2 Books* (1804). Relief etching with watercolour. Plate 1. Copy D, printed in 1818, Library of Congress. ©*Blakearchive.org*.

Blake shows Milton's Adam making a hand gesture that blocks light and clarity. In the portrait for Hayley's library, he uses Milton's blindness to represent his inspired poetic argument. This is therefore a portrait of Milton's gaze that cannot be reciprocated. Like

[443] William Wells, (compiler), *William Blake's 'Heads of the Poets' for Turret House, the residence of William Hayley, Felpham*, (Manchester: City of Manchester Art Gallery, 1969).

Woolf and Keats, Blake thinks that Milton negatively affects the achievement of later poets, but he makes this statement visually, rather than verbally. Blake takes issue with Milton from a theological point of view, but he also anticipates Woolf's interest in Milton and the patriarchal poetic canon. This also shows us that Woolf's wish in 'Thoughts on Peace in An Air Raid', to return us to Blake's original printed 'manuscript', might be about visual as well as verbal aesthetics, and that 'Mental fight' is in part a challenge to Milton's masculine authority.

6.2. Milton and feminism: critical readings of *Comus* in *The Voyage Out* (1915)

Two critics who offer opposing accounts of Woolf's relationship to Milton are Lisa Low and Christine Froula. Both focus on Woolf's allusion, in her first novel *The Voyage Out,* to Milton's poetic play *Comus: A Masque* (1634). At stake in the parallels between Woolf's novel and *Comus* is a misogynist form of idealistic virginal chastity, which both Rachel Vinrace, the protagonist of *The Voyage Out,* and Milton's figure of the Lady in *Comus* are culturally expected to attain. Louise A. DeSalvo suggests that Rachel Vinrace's death in *The Voyage Out* is almost inevitable, commenting: 'without chastity, a young woman is as good as dead.'[444]

In *Comus* there is a rhetorical contest between the Lady and the reveller Comus, who was the son of the enchantress Circe in Greek mythology. Comus uses speech to corrupt the Lady's chastity and virtue. While Lisa Low sees both the Lady and Rachel Vinrace as 'victim[s] of sexual violence', she attributes to the Lady more 'success', an odd term to use in this context,

[444] Louise A. DeSalvo, 'Virginia, Virginius, Virginity', in *Faith of a (Woman) Writer,* Alice Kessler-Harris, and William McBrien (ed.), (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 181-82.

because the Lady 'rebuffs her assailant and is even strengthened by the experience of sexual assault'. In contrast Rachel, who is 'hardly free', simply 'wilts like a flower and dies.' [445]

Moreover, Low thinks the root cause of differences between Rachel and the Lady is the respective gender construction of Woolf and Milton's respective historic contexts:

> Ultimately, the difference between the fates of Rachel and the Lady is the difference between their male and female subjectivity. Woolf's heroine is born into a Victorian world which silences because it sexualises women. Interfered with by Dalloway, Rachel wilts like a flower and dies. The revolutionary heroine of Milton's *Comus* on the other hand, is born into an England on the fiery verge of civil war, and she is invested with the power and revolutionary self-confidence of newfound male speech and subjectivity. Milton's Lady is invested with the privileged male subjecthood of Milton himself: she shares the position of speaking strength that even a revolutionary outsider like Milton occupies. Instead of internalising the violence of her assailant, she denounces him, speaking in a mighty voice that, charged with the approaching revolutionary fervour of the English civil war, Woolf dimly foresaw as one that could prepare the way for feminism.[446]

Though Low convinces us that the Lady's speech has the potency of Milton's subject position as 'revolutionary outsider', through access to rhetoric 'charged with the approaching revolutionary fervour of the English civil war', it is odd to say Milton's Lady is 'strengthened by the experience of sexual assault.' After the experience of Comus's sexual violence, an obvious subtext of the rhetorical contest between Comus and the Lady, she is transfixed to her seat by Comus's magic spell. Low fails to observe that Rachel Vinrace and the Lady in *Comus* are different not solely in rhetoric. As Lisa Tyler writes, 'Unlike Milton's Lady, Rachel has no one to whom she can turn, no one who will listen and save her.'[447]

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[445] Lisa Low, 'Woolf's Allusion to *Comus* in *The Voyage Out*', in *Milton and Gender*, Catherine Gimmelli Martin (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 265-66. Cf. Lisa Low, 'Two Figures in Dense Violet Night': Virginia Woolf, John Milton, and the Epic Vision of Marriage, *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 1 (1995), 68-88

[446] Lisa Low, 'Woolf's Allusion to Comus in *The Voyage Out*', in *Milton and Gender*, pp. 265-66.

[447] Lisa Tyler, '"Nameless Atrocities" and the Name of the Father: Literary Allusion and Incest in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*' *Woolf Studies Annual*, 1995, Vol. 1 (1995), 26-46 (37-38). See also Diana L. Swanson "My Boldness Terrifies Me": Sexual Abuse and Female Subjectivity in *The Voyage Out*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 41 No. 4 (Winter, 1995), 284-309

In further contrast to Low, Christine Froula identifies significantly more overlap between Rachel Vinrace and Milton's Lady. Firstly, Froula does not consider Milton's revolutionary moment of the English civil war, focusing instead on 'the late-Victorian culture of Woolf's girlhood', which is a heavy influence on the world of *The Voyage Out*. Whereas Low says that 'Woolf dimly foresaw' feminist potential in the Lady's speeches, Froula writes that: 'Milton's words are fatal to Rachel.' [448] Towards the end of *The Voyage Out*, Rachel Vinrace's prospective husband, Terence Hewet, reads lines from *Comus* aloud to her on a very hot day and this makes Rachel increasingly ill. Milton's poetry exacerbates Rachel's medical condition and seems to be among the causes of her death.

Froula believes Rachel's death to symbolise that violating ideal of chastity that even the apparently benign figure of Sabrina, the nymph expected to save the Lady from Comus, may be complicit in with Comus, in wishing 'to preserve the lady's chastity.'[449] Froula sees Sabrina as a dangerously traumatised figure because her underwater existence was originally 'initiated in flight from a rape.'[450] She concludes that Sabrina, the Lady and Rachel Vinrace, are subjected to 'the female destiny given by the marriage plot that occasions Milton's poem.'[451] *Comus* begins with a walk in a forest where the Lady is accompanied by her brothers, but they become separated. Searching for their sister, the brothers encounter the attendant spirit who tells them:

> There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,
> That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
> *Sabrina* is her name, a Virgin pure; […]
> If she be right invok't in warbled Song,
> For maid'nhood she loves, and will be swift

[448] Christine Froula, 'Out of the Chrysalis: Female Initiation and Female Authority in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* Vol. 5 No. 1 (Spring, 1986), (84).
[449] Froula, 'Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', (84).
[450] Ibid (84).
[451] Ibid (84).

To aid a Virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need.[452]

The attendant spirit shares the words of this 'warbled song' with the brothers, a song that proves to be a key pre-occupation of the protagonist of *The Voyage Out,* Rachel Vinrace.

Expanding on the idea of Miltonic 'female destiny', Froula points out that the lines from *Comus* that appear in *The Voyage Out* belong to a misogynistic tradition of poetry imagining women as either 'bound' and 'endangered' or as 'drowned nymphs', and she adds that these distortions support the idea that marriage is a cultural 'destiny' for women. Reducing 'female sexuality' amounts to 'virginity, domesticity, and maternity.'[453] She argues that Woolf challenges the 'forking path' of 'impossible alternatives' that were available to women during the transition from Victorian culture to the early twentieth century: 'virginity, marriage, and maternity on one side and to rape, fallenness, and death on the other.'[454] It is the impossibility of these two extremes, both based on shame and reinforced by Milton's poetry, that is unbearable for Rachel Vinrace. Froula uses the same argument made by Gilbert and Gubar about Milton's misogynist poetry to interpret Woolf's allusion to *Comus* in *The Voyage Out.*

It is testament to Woolf's radical first novel that it was first received as a dangerous text. One anonymous 1915 reviewer commented: 'Never was a book more feminine, more recklessly feminine.'[455] Froula's article provided a necessary correction to previous interpretations of Woolf's allusion to *Comus*. For instance, in 1965, Josephine O'Brien Schaefer dismissed the allusion because it adds nothing except to 'crassly highlight the coming throes of fever.'[456] Woolf spent more than a decade drafting, refining, and honing *The Voyage Out* before it was published in 1915. As a result, draft material exists in physical form that is effectively a

[452] Milton, *Complete Poems and Prose*, pp.109-110.
[453] Froula, 'Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', (84).
[454] Ibid (84).
[455] 'Unsigned review', *TLS*, (1 April 1915); reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage*, p.52
[456] Josephine O Brien Schaefer, *The Three-Fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* (London: Mouton, 1965), p.46

different version of the same novel. For much of this project Woolf's working title was *Melymbrosia*.

Louise DeSalvo decided to edit and publish a text of this earlier version, with the title *Melymbrosia*.[457] She justifies this by arguing that Woolf overworked the text, reducing the 'clarity and savagery' of her critique of patriarchy, making 'Rachel more naïve and dreamy, less fury-filled.'[458] Both Low and DeSalvo choose to make judgements of Rachel's strength as a person, whether she is 'naïve' or boldly 'fury-filled.' With greater theoretical sophistication than both, Froula situates her theoretical response in relation to the cultural context Woolf's writing.

I share the view outlined above first by Virginia Woolf, then later by Christine Froula, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, that Milton is not a feminist. However, despite being highly dubious, arguing Milton is a feminist has been critically plausible position since at least 1979.[459] Joseph Anthony Wittreich's evidence for Milton the feminist consists of women who have praised Milton's treatment of gender, such as Lady Mary Chudleigh, who spoke highly of the Miltonic representation of women in *Paradise Lost*, identifying Milton's text as an improvement on biblical representations of Adam and Eve.[460] Yet as Claire Colebrook observes, Wittreich risks forgetting 'oppression can be internalised and that repressive ideologies are also adopted by the oppressed.'[461]

[457] Louise A. DeSalvo, *Melymbrosia* (San Francisco, Cleiss Press, 2002), pp.xii-xxiii
[458] DeSalvo, *Melymbrosia*, pp.xii-xxiii
[459] See Joseph Anthony Wittreich, *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).
[460] Lady Mary Chudleigh, *The Female Preacher. Being an Answer to a Late Rude and Scandalous Wedding-Sermon* (London: H. Hills, 1707), p.9.
[461] Claire Colebrook, *John Milton, William Blake, and the history of individualism*, (Edinburgh: PhD, 1995), p.144.

6.3. Woolf, Blake, Milton, and independent artistic publishing

Since Woolf compares Milton and Shakespeare, it is worth noting that Blake makes this same comparison. In his 1793 *Prospectus: To the Public*, produced to promote and sell his innovative illuminated books, Blake makes a bold statement about a new technique of printmaking:

> The Labours of the Artist, the Poet, the Musician, have been proverbially attended by poverty and obscurity; this was never the fault of the Public, but was owing to a neglect of means to propagate such works as wholly have absorbed the Man of Genius. Even Milton and Shakespeare could not publish their own works.
>
> This difficulty has been obviated by the Author of the following productions now presented to the Public: who has invented a method of Printing both Letter-press and Engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered, while it produces works at less than one fourth of the expense. (CPPWB P 692).

Blake's claims are grand, but art historians have credited his work with fundamental innovation. For example, E.H. Gombrich cites his work as crucial to a 'break in tradition' whereby 'artists felt free to put their private visions on paper as hitherto only the poets had done.'[462] Blake was not necessarily the sole inventor of the relief etching technique he describes, and which allowed him to add the texts of his poems onto a copper plate in reverse, alongside his images, without using a letterpress workshop. In 1784 the artist George Cumberland describes in a letter to his brother a similar process of 'etching words instead of landscapes' but adds: 'nobody has yet thought of the utility.'[463] However, Blake certainly used this technique more than any other artist in the eighteenth century. Blake's statement attempts to explain the usefulness of etching text onto a copper plate. He is confidently asserting that he has found a technique of combining image and text, in one's own home, with an etching press, that most artists will want to use.

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[462] E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1963), p. 366
[463] George Cumberland, *The Cumberland Letters*, Clementina Black (ed.), (London. Secker, 1912), pp. 317-318.

Of course, in Woolf's period, relief etching was no longer an innovative technique. Quite the opposite, Blake enthusiasts and admirers tried to recover what was lost about his technique. None of Blake's plates survived, except for a very small fragment, which has made it difficult to determine his exact process.[464] Blake's technique remains a question of interest to Blake scholars, the exact process being an object of extensive debate.[465] It is also of interest to fine art publishers who, ever since the last two decades of the nineteenth century, have wished to publish a facsimile of Blake's illustrated poetry using the same techniques as the artist.[466] Yet although Blake and others had already invented this technique, and although photographic publishing was superseding etching as a way to combine image and text, there was an avant-garde printmaking workshop, Atelier 17, led by Stanley William Hayter, that studied Blake's prints and the surviving plate fragment, and invited artists to come to the workshop to make original experimental artworks inspired by Blake's printmaking.[467]

Blake's claim in the 'Prospectus' quoted above that Milton and Shakespeare were unable to publish their own works is partly a Miltonic point. In *Areopagitica*, a speech made to the English Parliament in 1644, Milton argues that an author forced to work 'under the correction of his patriarchal licencer' finds their 'authority' diminished, often feeling there is no choice but to 'send the book forth worse than he had made it'. [468] Though Milton writes in a different

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[464] Fragment, cancelled plate, *America a Prophecy*, 1793, is in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, national Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.
[465] On Blake's printmaking see Robert N. Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker*, (Princeton: New Jersey, 1980); Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Michael Phillips, *The Creation of the Songs from Manuscript to Illuminated Printing*, (London: The British Library, 2000); Mei-Ying Sung, *William Blake and the Art of Engraving* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009).
[466] See William Muir's hand-coloured *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (printed and hand coloured) (London: Edmonton Press, 1885); Paul Ritchie, *Songs of Innocence; Songs of Experience*, with an essay by Joseph Viscomi (Manchester: Manchester Etching Workshop, 1983), Michael Phillips, W*illiam Blake: Songs of Innocence of Experience: A Selection of plates printed by Michael Phillips* (Oxford: Christchurch upper library, 2016).
[467] See Stanley William Hayter, *New Ways of Gravure*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 64-67. Visual studies of Woolf's modernism focus on film and photography see: Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002); Leslie Hankins, 'Virginia Woolf and Film', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the arts*, pp.351-75; Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[468] John Milton, *Selected Prose*, C.A. Patrides (ed.), (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 225.

historical context, there were still attempts to censor modernist novels, to legislate the publication of books. Woolf was fully aware, since she gave evidence at the trial, of the censorship of Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). Moreover, *Areopagitica* is a resonant text in the early twentieth century. In two twentieth-century cultural artefacts I discuss in Chapter Four, Robert Bridges's anthology *The Spirit of Man*, and Humphrey Jennings's propaganda film *Words for Battle*, excerpts from *Areopagitica* are used. Thus, in the early twentieth century Milton's arguments have close cultural association with the Jerusalem hymn. Like Blake, Milton is often misunderstood as a poet who evokes a simplistic form of British patriotism.

Like both Blake and Milton, Woolf also had reasons to be critical of publishing practices that take control away the writer's own artistic determination. This explains why in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf makes a possibly perplexing, contradictory statement about print culture and the difficulties of artistic genius surviving in print:

> Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes. Now and again an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns blazes out and proves its presence. But certainly it never got itself on to paper.' (AROO 57)

Though more oblique than Blake's statement in the 'prospectus', Woolf's comment here attests to her own belief in the artist being able to control the means of production of their own work. Clearly, the writing of Emily Brontë and Robert Burns was published. Woolf's point is that publication is never entirely on the terms of Brontë and Burns. She thinks the 'presence' of literary genius is not fully realised if a writer alters their words to suit expectations, whether those of the market or publisher. This is another form of what she calls 'intellectual slavery.'

Both Woolf and Blake believe therefore that the artist must have fully independent control of the means of artistic production. Blake achieves this through his relief etching technique that

allows him to combine 'letter-press' and 'engraving.' From her third novel, *Jacob's Room* (1922), onwards, Woolf published all her fiction independently, through the Hogarth Press, which gave her a degree of artistic independence.[469] Woolf's ventures in publishing her own work was an overall success. It helps her find an audience. Moreover, the Hogarth Press was unusually enduring, expanding from its beginnings in 1917, with small handmade letterpress pamphlets, to become one of the most successful independent publishing houses in the early twentieth century.[470]

In contrast to Blake, Woolf's manifesto statements of her own aesthetic priorities seldom include claims about the prospects of being commercially viable. In his 1793 'Prospectus', Blake claims that his new printmaking technique called relief etching will allow poet-painters, who want to visually illustrate their own poems, to do so at 'less than one fourth of the expense.' He ambitiously claims to have found a way to end the 'poverty and obscurity' that is so often the reward for an artist's work.

Blake scholars have been inclined to ask if Blake managed to make his books in a more financially viable manner. Despite identifying 'extravagant hope' and 'temporary failure' in the 'Prospectus', Morris Eaves nonetheless sees it is as strong in its ambition aims:

> The story that Blake tells incorporates an explicit critique of the artists' limited access to markets and the limitations of their autonomy, which translates in political terms to a lack of liberty. Blake's story also incorporates an implicit critique of unenriched information, while it promises, above all, to solve long-standing production problems and liberate artistic identity at its core.[471]

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[469] Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (London: Hogarth Press, 1922)

[470] On Hogarth Press business success J.H. Willis jr, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers: The Hogarth Press: 1917-1941*. On its handprinted books, see Donna E. Rhein, *The Handprinted Books of Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1917-1932*, (Ann Arbor: Umi Research Press, 1985); Tony Bradshaw, 'Virginia Woolf and Book Design' (pp.280-98); Laura Marcus, 'Virginia Woolf as publisher and editor: the Hogarth Press' (pp.263-7), both in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*.

[471] Morris Eaves, 'National Arts and Disruptive Technologies in Blake's prospectus of 1793', in *Blake Nation and Empire*, S. Clark and D. Worral. (eds.) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.119-120.

As Michael Phillips explains, what Blake definitely achieved was control of his own practice by no longer relying on a letterpress workshop, thereby avoiding 'the constraints of conventional illustrated book production' and 'the imposition of censorship.'[472] Blake might have been right that buying copper plates for etching, to print one's own poetry and design, allows an artist to be free of the letterpress workshop and therefore work, as he says, 'at less than one fourth of the expense.' However, despite reducing the absolute monetary costs of artistic production, the additional labour time needed for William and Catherine to ink, print, and then hand colour the illuminated printed poetry may have been limiting. Blake also worked on a supply and demand basis, which alongside the additional labour time might explain why each illuminated book is printed in relatively small numbers.

Of his illuminated works advertised in the 'Prospectus', Blake reprints the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* the most. There are twenty-six extant copies of the *Songs of Innocence* (1789) on its own, and thirty-five of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. There were also sixteen copies printed after Blake's death in 1832.[473] There are only four extant copies of *Milton* (1804), and no more than eleven of *Jerusalem*. It would be incorrect to say though that Blake entirely lacked an astute understanding of business. As Sarah Haggarty notes, his 'relation to friends, patrons, and clients is in all cases marked by a mixture of business and donation.'[474] Blake always has his work published with a view about how to engage an audience. His first book *Poetical Sketches* was prefaced by an 'Advertisement' announced that the work was 'the production of untutored youth.' [475] Richard C. Sha explains

[472]Michael Phillips, *William Blake: Apprentice and Master* (Oxford: Ashmolean, 2014), p.103.
[473] For details see *Blakearchive.org*
[474] Sarah Haggarty, *Blake's Gifts: Poetry and the Politics of Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.2
[475] The David V. Erdman edition of the complete Blake I am using does not include this advertisement. Instead see William Blake, 'Advertisement', as quoted by J.T.Smith in an extract from *Nollekens and his Times*; reprinted in *William Blake: The Critical Heritage*, pp.48-49. Leonard and Virginia Woolf could read the 'Advertisement' in their Noel Douglas replica of *Poetical Sketches* (See my second appendix). J.T. Smith's account in *Nollekens* suggests it was one of Blake's supporters in printing *Poetical Sketches*, the Reverend A.S. Matthew, who wrote the advertisement. Stuart Peterfreund argues Blake definitely wrote the 'Advertisement' in:

that Blake's note of self-deprecation is a rhetorical convention of the sketch that 'flaunts its imperfections', in the deliberate hope the reader will 'imagine what the artist might truly have accomplished with the proper tools, time, and education' and be impressed by the 'authentic' appearance of the work.[476]

6.4. Blake and 'Milton's Bogey'

Though Woolf alludes to *Comus* in *The Voyage Out*, she is also very interested in *Paradise Lost*, as shown by her 1918 diary entry on Milton. This makes it worth discussing Blake's view of the *Paradise Lost*. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in the plate mentioned above, 'The Voice of the Devil', Blake states: 'The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & god, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it.' (CPPWB MHH 35). He implies here that Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*. Romantic poets often share this interpretation. In the preface to his own poem *Prometheus Unbound* (1815), Percy Bysshe Shelley argues that Milton's Satan 'engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry' whereby the 'faults' and 'wrongs' of his actions are diminished as they 'exceed all measure.' [477] Shelley believes Milton's imagining of Satan makes even the most critical reader suspend moral judgement. Twentieth-century studies of Milton also occasionally adopt this Romantic reading of Milton.[478]

'The Problem of Originality and Blake's Poetical Sketches' in *Speak Silence: Rhetoric and Culture in Blake's Poetical Sketches*, Mark L. Greenberg (ed.), (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), pp. 71-104. See also: Robert F. Gleckner, *Blake's Prelude: 'Poetical Sketches'* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1982).

[476] Richard C. Sha, *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

[477] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Preface to Prometheus Unbound' (1916), in *The Selected Prose and Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth editions, 2002), p.226.

[478] For a reading of Milton's theology that draws on Blake see for example William Empson, *Milton's God*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961).

Blake reaches his view of Milton when attempting a comprehensive and complicated imaginative response to biblical tradition. Blake is convinced that both 'Bibles' and 'Sacred codes' have for centuries disseminated three incorrect theological views:

> 1. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul.
>
> 2. That Energy. calld evil. is alone from the Body. & that Reason. calld Good. is alone from the Soul.
>
> 3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies. (CPPWB MHH 34).

Blake wants to correct these three theological ideas. He believes the following 'contraries' are an improvement:

> 1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discernd by the five senses. the chief inlets of Soul in this age
>
> 2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
>
> 3. Energy is Eternal Delight (CPPWB MHH 34).

Blake wants us to understand that energy and reason are not opposites. Rather, reason is a tangible limit on energy, but energy is not finite because it is 'eternal delight.' Additionally, the body and soul are not 'distinct' since body is one 'portion of soul.'

Blake makes these comments pertinent to his judgement of Milton when he begins to discuss 'desire':

> Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.
>
> And being restraind it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire. (CPPWB MHH 34).

Blake thinks neither energy nor desire can or should ever be restrained. He believes energy is as important as reason for interpreting Milton. He explains that the 'history' of restrained desire is 'written in Paradise lost', adding the intriguing statement that Milton's 'Governor of Reason is call'd Messiah.' (CPPWB MHH 35). He considers Milton's figures of Christ to be

coercive in their efforts to enforce reason because he worries about theologies that will circumscribe the individual's imagination. Though 'Milton's bogey' is Woolf's term, Blake also dreads Milton's prominence.

In 1920, Denis Saurat writes that 'the elemental parts of human life are passion; but in Milton reason rules over desire, while Blake's aim is to set passion free from all control of reason.'[479] Saurat responds partly to Blake's thoughts about Milton in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Saurat means to be objective on the differences between Milton and Blake. However his words are better understood as an objective characterisation of what Blake thinks makes his own work different from Milton. Saurat appreciates Blake's interest in the evidence that Milton wanted to prioritise 'passion' over the 'control of reason.' Blake passionately believes new poets, novelists and artists must all try to emulate Milton who could be 'at liberty.' This is one of the reasons Gilbert and Gubar think feminist responses to Milton often take inspiration from Blake.

After Saurat, study of Milton and Blake becomes a specific area in literary studies. For decades, critics imagined a 'line of vision' connecting Milton and Blake, a 'line' linked to the divine authority both Blake and Milton try to mediate in their poetry. I take this phrase 'line of vision' from a 1975 collection of essays edited by Joseph Anthony Wittreich.[480] Wittreich says that Milton and Blake are both 'ministers of the Word' who 'derive their vision from Christ'.'[481]

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[479] Denis Saurat, *Blake and Milton*, (Thesis: University of Bordeaux, 1920), pp.3-4.
[480] See Joseph Anthony Wittreich, (ed.) *Angel of Apocalypse*: *Blake's idea of Milton* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975). On Milton's influence on Romanticism in general see also Joseph Anthony Wittreich, ed, *The Romantics on Milton: formal essays and critical asides*, (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970); Leslie Brisman, *Milton's Poetry of Choice and its Romantic Heirs*, (Ithaca: N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973).
[481] Wittreich, (ed.) 'Preface' to *Milton and the Line of Vision* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975)., p.xv-xvi.

Often critics believe that there is an intense intimacy between Blake and Milton. Harold Bloom concludes that a 'Jobean problem', namely 'evil as it confronted him in his own life', follows the same trajectory in Blake and Milton's poetry, allowing both to be 'comforted by a paradise within himself, happier far than the outer one he had failed to bring about in his England.'[482] The England that Milton and Blake 'failed to bring about' is not simply phantasmatic. It denotes an anti-establishmentarian quest for what Vivian De Sola Pinto calls the 'other England' of which Blake is part: 'the England of Bunyan, Defoe and Cobbett, which was outside the pale of the governing class with its wealth and leisure and university and public-school education.'[483] This concept of 'England' is antithetical to that nationalist ideal admired by Francis Younghusband, Robert Bridges, and *Fight for Right.*

In 1995, Claire Colebrook challenges the prevailing approach to Blake and Milton, arguing that instead of 'continuity and shared vision', there are actually 'fundamentally opposed philosophical presuppositions' that separate Blake and Milton's respective writings.[484] Colebrook resists the idea Blake and Milton are almost identical. She points out that often the critics who unite Blake and Milton mistakenly use 'prophecy and the tradition of apocalypse' as a 'theory of meaning' for understanding Milton's influence on Blake's poetry.[485] When 'line of vision' critics express fervent belief in Blake's similarity to Milton they intensely echo Blake's statements on Milton, rather than developing an objective, sceptical approach. Similarly, Jackie DiSalvo takes issue with the 'line of vision' approach because it means we forget Blake was an 'iconoclastic genius who created a totally unique private, mythological

[482] Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 362.
[483] Vivian De Sola Pinto, 'William Blake and D.H. Lawrence', in *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon* Alvin H. Rosenfield (ed.) (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969), p.87
[484] Colebrook, *Milton, Blake, and the history of individualism*, p. 5.
[485] Ibid, p.4.

system.'[486] Because of its enormous influence, the 'mythological system' in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, cannot be called 'unique' or 'private.' In contrast to both Colebrook and DiSalvo, John Beer claims Blake brings Milton's 'allegorical method' to its 'full conclusion.'[487]

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and in *Milton,* Blake's response to *Paradise Lost,* engages verbally with Milton's ideas. By contrast, his illustrations to *Comus* are standalone, visual art works. This is also true of Blake's illustrations to *Paradise Lost,* but they can be interpreted through Blake's explicit statements on Milton. His attitude to *Comus* is made explicit, however, only in the images. According to Stephen C. Behrendt, Blake's multiple illustrations to multiple Milton texts must be understood in an eighteenth-century 'tradition of corrective criticism', because Blake's visual responses to Milton are 'interpretive and corrective.'[488]

Despite calling Blake's illustrations to Milton 'corrective', Behrendt's approach still has a lot in common with that of the 'line of vision' critics. He believes Blake 'more accurately' rendered Milton's 'fundamental vision.' [489] Behrendt's idea that Blake corrects Milton's errors is possibly influenced by Harold Bloom's reclaiming, from Lucretius, of the term *clinamen,* which Bloom says is a 'corrective movement' in a poem that 'implies that the precursor went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves.'[490] Bloom's idea of the *clinamen* pertains to Woolf and Blake because in two of her essays, 'Thoughts on Peace' and 'Flumina Amem Silvasque',

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[486] Jackie Di Salvo, *War Of the Titans: Blake's Critique of Milton* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), p.5.Cf. Florence Sandler, 'The Iconoclastic Enterprise: Blake's critique of Milton's Religion', *Blake Studies*, Vo.5, No.1 (Fall 1972), 13-57.
[487] John Beer, *Blake's Visionary Universe*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), p. 3.
[488] Stephen C. Behrendt, *The Moment of Explosion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 1. On Blake's illustrations to Milton see also: Pamela Dunbar, *William Blake's Illustrations to the Poetry of John Milton*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), Betty Charlene Werner, *Blake's Vision of the Poetry of Milton: Illustrations to Six Poems* (Lewisburg: Bucknells University Press, 1986).
[489] Behrendt, *The Moment of Explosion*, p. 1.
[490] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 14.

Woolf quotes Blake verbatim. Bloom's theory indicates that a text can be marked by a kind of identical voice yet retain originality. Since Woolf often agrees with Blake, her essays are not 'corrective' in quite the way described by Behrendt and Bloom, but Woolf's historical context also shifts the significance of Blake's words.

Behrendt explains how Blake's illustrations to Comus 'deviate from the text they accompany to reveal its errors': 'The dogmatic defence of physical and intellectual-imaginative chastity essayed remained an anathema to Blake.'[491] When Blake says that Milton sometimes wrote 'in fetters', he is opposing the purity of Milton's desired 'intellectual-imaginative chastity.' Woolf's critical response to Milton is part of the same 'interpretive and corrective' tradition. According to Behrendt, Blake's illustrations criticise and explore Milton's 'original text' and the 'accumulated critical response.' [492] Of the eighteenth-century criticism on Milton, Woolf most likely read the writing of Samuel Johnson. Her interest in Johnson is well documented in scholarship.[493]Woolf owned several volumes of Johnson's writing. My second appendix references the work from Woolf's library in which Johnson's views on Milton are represented.

6.5. Woolf's allusion to *Comus* in *The Voyage Out* and 'On Being Ill' and Blake's illustrations to *Comus*

I mention in Chapter Three that Blake illustrates *Comus*. I also mention that Leonard and Virginia Woolf own a 1926 edition of this poem that includes monochrome facsimiles of Blake's images. As mentioned in Chapter One, under the heading 'Geoffrey Keynes and the

[491] Behrendt, The Moment of Explosion, p. 36.
[492]Ibid, p. 1.
[493] See Beth Carole Rosenberg, *Virginia Woolf and Samuel Johnson: Common Readers* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995). Essays that respond critically to what is missing in Rosenberg's argument include: Jane Goldman, 'Who let the dogs out? Samuel Johnson, Thomas Carlyle, Virginia Woolf, and the Little Brown Dog', in *Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury, Volume 2: International Influence and Politics*, Lisa Shahriari, and Gina Potts, (eds) (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp.46-66.

Blake centenary', when Woolf was still writing *The Voyage Out*, there was a substantial exhibition of Blake's work at the National Gallery of British Art (later the Tate Gallery) that includes Blake's original watercolour illustrations to *Comus*.[494] In 'On Being Ill', Woolf takes a renewed interest in Milton's *Comus*. Clearly in 1926 both Leonard and Virginia Woolf are becoming increasingly aware of Blake's visual responses to Milton. The edition of Comus, illustrated by Blake that Leonard and Virginia owned, was announced in the *TLS* as a 'beautiful book', but readers were advised to be sceptical about the 'scholarship' and 'the accuracy of its text.'[495]

There is clear evidence that Woolf is aware that Blake illustrates Milton's *Comus*. It is also possible to note the strength of Woolf's opposition to Miltonic chastity. In the same article by Lisa Low cited above, she writes that Milton's 'principal theme' is chastity, but that by chastity his meaning is not necessarily to do with sex and/or gender, because chastity can also be a mental state conditioned by 'sanctity and integrity of self.' Milton's Lady tries to defend this 'integrity of self', saying to Comus: 'Fool, do not boast./ Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind.'[496] In *A Room of One's Own,* in a scene about women being denied access to the libraries of 'Oxbridge', Woolf echoes the Lady's speech:

> Literature is open to everybody. I refuse to allow you, Beadle though you are, to turn me off the grass. Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind. (AROO 112-15).

Moreover, discussing the playwright Aphra Behn (1640-1689), an established literary genius writing in the same century as Milton, Woolf thinks there is still shame in the seventeenth century in being financially independent by writing. Nothing could be worse than 'living the life of Aphra Behn':

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[494] See *Catalogue of Loan Exhibition of Works of William Blake: October to December, 1913* (London: HM's Stationery office, 1913). The exhibition ran between October and December at the National Gallery of British art.
[495] Anonymous, 'The Julian Comus', *TLS*, 1 April 1926.
[496] Milton, *Complete Poems and Prose*, p.105

> Death would be better! and the door was slammed faster than ever. That profoundly interesting subject, the value that men set upon women's chastity and its effect upon their education, here suggests itself for discussion, and might provide an interesting book if any student at Girton or Newnham cared to go into the matter (AROO 74).

Woolf identifies 'the value that men set upon women's chastity', as damaging to women's education and a subject for urgent scholarship to be attempted by 'any student at Girton or Newnham.' Behn is a foil to Judith Shakespeare, a financially and culturally esteemed writer, whose success comes at the cost of cultural denigration.

In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf is already engaging with *Comus* as a text that idealises a misogynist form of chastity. This emerged in the discussion of Froula and Low's critical responses above. It is significant that Terence Hewet reads to Rachel Vinrace from *Comus*, before their marriage, as if Milton's poem is an instruction in chaste and virtuous marriage. Woolf alludes explicitly to *Comus* in *The Voyage Out*, describing a scene in which it is 'too hot to talk' or to read since no text 'would withstand the power of the sun' except Milton's *Comus*:

> Many books had been tried and then let fall, and now Terence was reading Milton aloud, because he said the words of Milton had substance and shape, so that it was not necessary to understand what he was saying; one could merely listen to his words; one could almost handle them.
>
> > There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
>
> he read,
>
> > That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream.
> >
> > Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
> >
> > Whilhom she was the daughter of Locrine,
> >
> > That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
>
> The words in spite of what Terence had said, seemed to be laden with meaning, and perhaps it was for this reason that it was painful to listen to them; they sounded strange; they meant different things from what they usually meant. Rachel at any rate could not keep her attention fixed upon them, but went off upon curious trains of thought suggested by words such as "curb" and "Locrine" and "Brute," which brought unpleasant sights before her eyes, independently of their meaning. (VO, 398-399).

Woolf makes this a visual response to *Comus,* by privileging typography over semantics, sense and syntax. Instead, it is the visual appearance of the poem that matters. Woolf writes that for Terence Milton's 'words had substance and shape.' Rachel becomes fixated on the words of the song used as an invocation to Sabrina. Terence and Rachel's responses to Milton's poem are in tension. While Terence thinks the 'substance and shape' is more important than interpreting the poetry, Rachel finds Milton's lines 'laden with meaning.'

Woolf registers the 'substance and shape' of Milton's lines, and that 'one could almost handle them' by printing Milton's' lines in a smaller typeface. Her engagement with *Comus* therefore has a concrete visual element that connects it to Blake's illustrations. Though printed before the beginning of the Hogarth Press, Woolf already insists on exact typography, thereby achieving an element of that independence in publishing called for by Blake in his 1793 'Prospectus.' Like Blake's illustrations, Woolf's response to *Comus*, is partly a form of Blakean critical imitation, exploring parallels between Rachel and the Lady. As one of Blake's annotations to Joshua Reynolds makes clear, Blake does not see imitation as a form or mode of criticism. Rather, as he writes: 'Imitation is Criticism' (CPPWB Marg. 643). He does not see critical imitation as a trend of the eighteenth century, but a strict rule. As soon as Milton's words are used in Woolf's first novel, or transformed into Blake's illustrations, their meaning inevitably begins to change. Milton is inevitably criticized, for both constructive and negative reasons, when appropriated by Woolf and Blake.

In *The Voyage Out,* Woolf suggests Milton's misogynist speeches in *Comus* directly affect Rachel. Whereas Hewet can distance himself from the 'substance and shape' and the meaning of the poem, Rachel feels these words as intimately personal, meaning she does partly identify with the Lady. Rachel struggles to stop thinking about unchaste words in Milton's poems, such as 'curb' and 'brute', which, Woolf writes, stimulate 'curious trains of thought' and 'unpleasant sights' that affect Rachel 'independently of their meaning.' As she begins to

feel increasingly ill, Rachel considers interrupting Terence's reading, but first she wants to remember the incantatory song that will bring forth the nymph Sabrina:

> She decided that she would wait until he came to the end of a stanza, and if by that time she had turned her head this way and that, and it ached in every position undoubtedly, she would say very calmly that her head ached.
>
> Sabrina fair,
>
> Listen where thou art sitting
>
> Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
>
> In twisted braids of lilies knitting
>
> The loose train of thy amber dropping hair,
>
> Listen for dear honour's sake,
>
> Goddess of the silver lake,
>
> Listen and save!
>
> But her head ached; it ached whichever way she turned it. (VO, 399).

Though these lines invoking Sabrina do not help Rachel physically, they become an object of persistent interest:

> Her chief occupation during the day was to try to remember how the lines went:
>
> Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
>
> In twisted braids of lilies knitting
>
> The loose train of thy amber dropping hair;
>
> and the effort worried her because the adjectives persisted in getting into the wrong places (VO, 402).

Though Rachel is critical of Milton, she is also anxious about being disrespectful by accidentally misremembering the poetry. Since Rachel's focus is on the nymph, we must look at how Blake represents Sabrina in his illustrations to *Comus*. His depiction of the Lady is also central to Blake's taking issue with Miltonic chastity.

In every image from the *Comus* illustrations in which Blake includes the Lady, he depicts her with almost no facial expression. The chastity she embodies is a form of emotional austerity

and embodied constraint. Such parallels between the Lady and Sabrina are of note in Blake's illustration of 'Sabrina Disenchanting the Lady':

Figure 12: William Blake 'Sabrina Disenchanting the Lady', in *Illustrations to Comus, the Butts set* (1815), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. ©*Blakearchive.org*

Blake makes Sabrina a mirror image of the Lady as though Sabrina confirms to the Lady the virtues of chastity. In the image above, Blake shows Sabrina freeing the Lady of Comus's spell. He depicts Comus transfixing the Lady in this image:

Figure 13: William Blake 'The Magic Banquet with the Lady Spell-Bound', in *Illustrations to Comus, the Butts set* (1815), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. ©*Boston Museum of Fine Arts online catalogue*.

Considering Blake's response to *Comus* in 1815 as an antecedent to Woolf's in 1915, enriches our understanding of Woolf's allusion as part of a tradition of critical response to Milton. Moreover, Woolf foregrounds a sensuous response to Milton. As she writes, through the perspectives of Hewet and Rachel, due to their 'substance and shape', reading Milton's poetry 'one could almost handle' the words. Blake's illustrations are an earlier attempt to give *Comus* this 'substance and shape' which Terence Hewet thinks the poem possesses. Both Woolf and Blake respond to the visceral and embodied effect of Milton's words, as well as their meaning.

Woolf writes about *Comus* again in 'On Being Ill', which she published in the *New Criterion*, when T.S. Eliot is the editor, in 1926, in the same year as the publication of the new edition of *Comus*, introduced in Chapter Three, Section Eight, that includes Blake's images. Since she is clearly interested in *Comus* when she writes 'On Being Ill', and since she knows from Geoffrey Keynes that the Blake centenary takes place in one year's time, Woolf is likely to make a connection between Blake's images in this new edition and her own essay. In fact, she might have wanted the new edition of *Comus*, because her essay was engaging with Milton's poems. In addition, 'On Being Ill' is implicitly a comment on *The Voyage Out*. Woolf's essay is about how poets and novelists have written about illness. Though Woolf does not discuss her own work, her allusion to *Comus* in *The Voyage Out* is a scene of illness. In both *The Voyage Out* and 'On Being Ill', Woolf finds *Comus* central to understanding and imagining the ill body. In 1926 Woolf reconsiders her earlier allusion to *Comus* in her first major achievement as a writer, in relation to Blake's imagery that she sees in the new edition of *Comus*.

In 'On Being Ill' Woolf argues that the English language 'has no words for the shiver and the headache.' (E IV 318). She claims that Shakespeare and Keats give us a rich vocabulary for when one 'falls in love', but not for illness (E IV 318). Woolf adds therefore that to articulate

the experience of illness we need to 'coin words', combining 'pain' with a 'lump of pure sound' until we can make 'a brand-new word.' (E IV 319) Furthermore, Woolf thinks that devising this novel language, will come more naturally to American writers less inclined to see the condition of English as 'sacred', being possessed of more 'genius' in 'the making of new words than in the disposition of the old' (E IV 319).

Woolf's claims about English language and illness will never convince everyone. The novelist Hilary Mantel writes the most scathing possible response, citing from English poetry and fiction: 'the whole vocabulary of singing aches, of spasms, of strictures and cramps; the gouging pain, the drilling pain, the pricking and pinching, the throbbing, burning, stinging, smarting, flaying.'[497] She acknowledges that 'language fails in that shuttered room called melancholia', but does not define this condition except by comparing it to a room 'where the floor is plush and the windowless walls are draped in black velvet: where any sound you make carries only feebly to the outside world.'[498] Julia Kristeva explains that the difficulty of articulating melancholia is a function of its relation to the body, because melancholia 'admits of the fearsome privilege of situating the analyst's question at the intersection of the biological and the symbolical.'[499]

Yet Mantel also makes a reasonable point. Her above examples are 'good' and 'old words' for describing the physical experience of illness. Woolf, however, only makes passing comments about the absence of vocabulary for illness in English. Woolf's central commitment is rather to a 'new language' for illness, one that is 'primitive, sensual, obscene', but more importantly writers need:

[497] Hilary Mantel, *Ink in the Blood: A Hospital Diary* (London: Harper Collins, 2010), p.176
[498] Mantel, *Ink in the Blood*, p. 176.
[499] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*, Leon S. Roudiez (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) p. 9

> a new hierarchy of the passions; love must be deposed in favour of a temperature of 104; jealousy give place to the pangs of sciatica; sleeplessness play the part of villain, and the hero become a white liquid with a sweet taste. (E IV 318-19).

Note that in *The Voyage Out*, when Rachel listens to lines from *Comus*, the poetry undermines her ability or inclination to communicate to Terence the severity of her illness. *Comus* contains no language that describes its sexual violence. It would be wrong to equate sexual violence with physical illness, but *Comus* clearly fails to communicate any kind of embodied experience. This is one reason Woolf returns to it in 'On Being Ill.' It entirely obscures the body through Milton's imaginative and highly intellectualised chastity. Though there is a challenge to Miltonic chastity in Blake's illustrations, it cannot entirely reverse the misogyny of Milton's masque, which clearly persists in the early twentieth century, it nonetheless shows his progressive desire to do so. Ensuring that Blake's illustrations are part of the critical discussion of Woolf's engagement with *Comus* gives us additional reason to consider the need for a critical response to Milton in Woolf studies. By including Blake's images, we can see that what Rachel is expected to learn from Milton's poem connects her to an art historical tradition as well as to a literary one.[500]

Moreover, we must consider the form of *Comus*. Northrop Frye argues the mask has the potential to mirror 'the interior of the human mind.'[501] The body is dissociated and elided when Rachel listens to Terence's reading *Comus* which leads to Rachel's death. There are therefore two specific ways to explain Rachel's 'symbolic death', to borrow Christine Froula's phrase. Firstly, we may observe the poem's language is too 'interior', imposing itself dangerously on Rachel's mind, preventing her from immediately asking for medical help.

[500] On Milton as a pedagogical presence in The Voyage Out, see Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Virginia Woolf's Pedagogical Scenes of Reading: "The Voyage Out, The Common Reader", and her "Common Readers", *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 38 No. 1, Virginia Woolf (Spring 1992), 101-125.
[501] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1957), p.291

Secondly, that Rachel is unable to adopt the critique of *Comus* exemplified by Blake's images.

This last point forms a stark contrast to Lisa Low's argument that Woolf identifies Milton as a precursor to modern feminism. Whereas Low identifies the potential for a coruscating critique of patriarchy in the Lady's Miltonic rhetoric, I suggest this critique is stronger in Blake's visual response. There is more similarity between Hewet's view of *Comus* and Blake's: both avoid interpreting the poem intellectually, preferring to give it a sensuous 'substance and shape.' To be critical of Comus needs insight into its absence of significant meaning. When Rachel tries to make sense of the poem, it continues to sound nonsensical, hence her struggle to understand and remember Milton's poetry.

This absence of meaning is recognized by Woolf in 'On Being Ill', when Woolf claims that illness is more suited to reading poetry than prose:

> *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is not the book for influenza, nor *The Golden Bowl*, nor *Madame Bovary*. On the other hand, with responsibility shelved and reason in abeyance – for who is going to exact criticism from an invalid or sound sense from the bed-ridden? – other tastes assert themselves; sudden, fitful, intense (E IV 324).

These 'other tastes' that are 'sudden, fitful, intense' are an example of this 'new hierarchy of the passions' insisted on by Woolf. She tries to alter the idea that love is a more important subject for writers than illness, but also the idea that 'sound sense' is more valuable than an ecstatic response to poetry. Her essay looks at modes of reading that are extrinsic to rationality, that are made possible by illness. Woolf is open to the idea that new discoveries can be made 'with responsibility shelved and reason in abeyance' (E IV 324). Similarly, as I show above, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake thinks energy is equally if not more important than rationality.

In ‘On Being Ill’, as an example of what happens ‘with responsibility shelved and reason in abeyance’, Woolf quotes two lines from *Comus* to outline the startling readings of poetry caused by illness:

> We rifle the poets of their flowers. We break off a line or two and let them open in the depths of the mind, spread their bright wings, swim like coloured fish in green waters:
>
> and oft at eve
> Visits the herds along the twilight meadows
>
> wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
> Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind
>
> (E IV 324)

Woolf isolates lines of poetry to indicate the fragmentary ‘fitful’ reading habits of the ill person. Though printed as if part of one poem, the first two lines Woolf quotes are from *Comus*, the second two from Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). Although it was first printed in 1926, Woolf reprints ‘On Being Ill’ in 1930, as a Hogarth Press pamphlet, with a cover illustrated by Vanessa Bell, and typesetting the piece herself. In ‘On Being Ill’, as printed in the *New Criterion*, the typeface for the quoted lines of poetry is smaller than the main text, as it was in *The Voyage Out*.

Though the final decision for the typesetting of the first editions of *The Voyage Out* and ‘On Being Ill’ might not have been made by Virginia Woolf, these minute visual details in her writing are still important. Since we know her interest in *Comus* in 1926 might be Blakean and since we know she links Blake to the visual as well as the verbal, responsible Woolf scholarship must be alert to her combinations of the visual and the verbal. Woolf also uses visual metaphors to describe the process whereby Shelley and Milton’s lines are absorbed by the ill reader, who will ‘rifle the poets of their flowers’ so that lines of poetry are liberated in ‘the depths of the mind’, to ‘spread their bright wings, swim like coloured fish in green waters.’ In the reading scene where Rachel Vinrace is confronted with Milton’s *Comus*,

Woolf shows 'reason in abeyance' having destructive consequences, but her engagement with poetic interpretation in 'On Being Ill' shows a positive example of reading with 'reason in abeyance.'

This means Woolf's engagement with *Comus* is also marked by Blakean reflection on whether it is 'reason' on the one hand, or desire and energy on the other, that proves more important for understanding Milton. Yet though Blake's illustrations must be part of the critical discussion of Woolf's allusion to *Comus*, and though Blake's criticism of Milton is a critique of patriarchal imaginings of chastity, Woolf's work must be distinguished from the 'line of vision' posited by scholars who unite Blake and Milton. To believe in this 'line of vision' is incompatible with Woolf's late argument about a collective, feminist figure of the author in Judith Shakespeare.

Lastly, I want to connect Woolf's response to Milton in *The Voyage Out* and 'On Being Ill' to a scene in *A Room of One's Own*, where Woolf recalls a Charles Lamb essay about consulting the original manuscript of Milton's *Lycidas* (1638), in which Lamb remembers being a student at Oxford: [502]

> Lamb wrote how it shocked him to think it possible that any word in Lycidas could have been different from what it is. To think of Milton changing the words in that poem seemed to him a sort of sacrilege. This led me to remember what I could of Lycidas and to amuse myself with guessing which word it could have been that Milton had altered, and why. It then occurred to me that the very manuscript itself which Lamb had looked at was only a few hundred yards away, so that one could follow Lamb's footsteps across the quadrangle to that famous library where the treasure is kept. (AROO 10-11).

This passage is worth comparing to Woolf's deconstruction of *Comus* because Woolf uses the story about Charles Lamb to question the notion of a pure and original version of Milton's poem. Both Charles Lamb and Rachel Vinrace are anxious about Milton's words being

[502]See Charles Lamb, 'Oxford at the Vacation', *London Magazine* Vol. 2 (October 1820) 365-69. Cf. Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen remembers Charles Lamb visiting Oxford in his book, *Sketches from Cambridge* (London: Macmillan, 1865), p.8.

reordered, which, as I state above about Rachel, means they differ from Blake who intensely revises Milton both in poetry and in painting. Woolf shows that Lamb is anxious because he sees Milton as a great genius. Woolf's position on Milton, whether in *The Voyage Out*, the 1918 diary, or *A Room of One's Own*, is always ambivalent. Woolf is both impressed by and sceptical of Milton's authority. If there is lineage from Milton's poetry, through Blake's illustrations, to Woolf's essays and novels, it cannot be conceptualised through this 'line of vision' but must be understood instead through ambivalence and the licence to revise Milton which is used both by Blake and Woolf. It may be this ambivalence that helps Blake and Woolf use this same licence to revise Milton.

7: Further continuities between Woolf and Blake

Some of the continuities between Woolf and Blake are not suited to the specific argument of the above chapters. Therefore, I bring them together here. I use similar ideas and texts that are central to my argument above, to ascertain what we can learn, if we extend our inquiry of Woolf and Blake as far as possible beyond empiricism. Since Woolf is against any attempt to have 'pinned down' Blake, we must try not to reduce her interest in Blake. Though Woolf may have not studied Blake's statements on Chaucer and Gibbon in detail, or assessed Blake's views on Hellenism, these potential continuities must be noted. They are highly specific explanations, over and above the general relation of modernism to Romanticism, for forms of continuity between Woolf and Blake.

Woolf and Blake on Chaucer

In their assessments of Chaucer, Woolf and Blake are followers of John Dryden. According to Claire Pace, a fundamental shift takes place in critical attitudes to Chaucer in 'the late eighteenth century', a break from the idea that Chaucer was 'too primitive, and too coarse to be worthy of serious attention.'[503] Similarly, Woolf scholars define her attitude to Chaucer within a broader history of criticism on Chaucer. Steve Ellis, for example, claims that Woolf's essay 'The Pastons and Chaucer' attempts a critical intervention that reduces Chaucer 'down to size', so that he can be appreciated according to his proper merits.[504] Marea Mitchell questions this view, arguing instead that examining, 'Chaucer and Middle English texts through Woolf's writing accords them a more pervasive and embedded

[503] Claire Pace, 'Blake and Chaucer: "Infinite Variety of Character"', *Art History*, Vol. 3 No. 4 (December, 1980), 388-411 (389).
[504] Steve Ellis, 'Framing the Father', *New Medieval Literatures*, Vol. 7, (2005), 35-52.

influence in English cultural history.'[505] According to Barbara Apstein, Woolf admires what is 'simple and straightforward' in Chaucer, rather than 'complexities and ironies.'[506]

John Dryden is the exception to the trend Claire Pace describes. He is ahead of his time in taking Chaucer very seriously. In 'Fables Ancient and Modern' (1700), he writes:

> In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold in the same Degree of Veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil; He is a perpetual Fountain of Good Sense; learn'd in all Science; and therefore speaks properly on all Subjects.[507]

Despite Dryden's attempt to make Chaucer as sophisticated and inspiring as Homer, it is precisely the primitivism of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* that appeals to Blake.

In the *Descriptive Catalogue*, in the entry describing his controversial panoramic tempera painting that illustrates all of Chaucer's pilgrims, Blake presents a bold interpretation of Chaucer:

> The characters of Chaucer's Pilgrims are the characters which compose all ages and nations: as one age falls, another rises, different to moral sight, but to immortals only the same; for we see the same characters repeated again and again, in animals, vegetables, minerals, and in men: nothing new occurs in identical existence; Accident ever varies, Substance can never change nor decay.
>
> Of Chaucer's characters, as described in the Canterbury Tales, some of the names or titles are altered by time, but the characters themselves for ever remain unaltered, and consequently they are the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life, beyond which Nature never steps. Names alter, things never alter. I have known multitudes of those who would have been monks in the age of monkery, who in this deistical age are deists. As Newton numbered the stars, and as Linneus numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men. (CPPWB DC 533)

Blake sees something historically unchangeable in Chaucer's pilgrims. He intends this as a comment on Chaucer's poetry, but he also wants to justify how he has chosen to illustrate it.

In her essay 'The Pastons and Chaucer', discussed above, Woolf imagines Sir John Paston

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[505] Marea Mitchell, '"The details of life and the pulsings" of affect', Virginia Woolf's Middle English Texts', *The Chaucer Revie*w Vol. 51 No. 1, (2016), 107-29, (108-109)
[506] Barbara Apstein, 'Chaucer, Virginia Woolf and "Between the Acts"', *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 2 (1996), 117-133 (118).
[507] John Dryden, *The Poems of John Dryden*, John Sargeaunt (ed.), (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.272.

reading Chaucer, intriguingly describing him by evoking a notion of the transhistorical: ‘He was one of those ambiguous characters who haunt the boundary line where one age merges in another and are not able to inherit either.’ (E IV 33). We know, given the likelihood that Woolf reads Pater on Blake, as discussed in Chapter Two, Section Five, that she also understands Blake boldly rejects the convention of any single age, and is often denounced for avoiding convention. Blake is also on the ‘boundary line’ between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Woolf and Blake on Hellenism

Both Woolf and Blake are interested in the transhistorical appeal of ancient Greek mythology. In ‘On not knowing Greek’ (1925), printed alongside ‘The Pastons and Chaucer’ in *The Common Reader First Series*, Woolf imagines, on the Athenian stage, a remarkable potency of human character that makes the tragic heroes of ancient Greek tragedy more than ‘mere figures, or plaster casts of human beings’:

> Yet it is not because we can analyse them into feelings that they impress us. In six pages of Proust we can find more complicated and varied emotions than in the whole of the Electra. But in the *Electra* or in the *Antigone* we are impressed by something different, by something perhaps more impressive – by heroism itself, by fidelity itself. In spite of the labour and the difficulty it is this that draws us back and back to the Greeks; the stable, the permanent, the original human being is to be found there. Violent emotions are needed to rouse him into action, but when thus stirred by death, by betrayal, by some other primitive calamity, Antigone and Ajax and Electra behave in the way in which everybody has always behaved; and thus we understand them more easily and more directly than we understand the characters in the Canterbury Tales. These are the originals, Chaucer’s the varieties of the human species. (E IV 42).

Whereas Blake and Dryden suggest the permanently enduring archetypes are those of Chaucer’s pilgrims, Woolf believes that the ‘originals’ are Antigone, Ajax, and Electra, who exemplify how ‘everybody has always behaved’, whereas Chaucer gives us early modern period ‘varieties of the human species.’

However, it is not solely their engagement with archetypes that forms a continuity between Woolf and Blake. Woolf's comments above on ancient Greek tragedy are an example of 'Romantic Hellenism', a critical preoccupation 'adopted' and developed 'by Goethe and Schiller, Hegel, Arnold, and Pater.'[508] Though tragically violent, Woolf also sees the figures in ancient Greek tragedy as 'stable' and 'permanent', attributing to them the 'balance and tranquillity' and 'consummate adequacy' of as 'Romantic Hellenism.'[509]

For Blake, the Hellenic perfection of art was sculptural more than it was dramatic. In the last year of his life, he engraves an image based on the ancient sculpture of Laocoön:

Figure 14: William Blake *The Laocoön*. Intaglio engraving. (c. 1826-27). Collection of Robert N. Essick. ©Blakearchive.org.

He depicts the mythological figure of Laocoön, the Trojan priest who attempts, with his sons, to warn their compatriots of the danger of Trojan horse sent by Ulysses with Greek soldiers

[508] Martin Aske, *Keats and Hellenism: an Essay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p.4
[509] Aske, *Keats and Hellenism,* p.4.

inside it to ambush Trojan forces. Blake surrounds the image with text that is largely decorative because its arrangement makes it hard to read.

He also identifies the Laocoön sculpture with archetypes that endure, claiming that we must associate it with 'The Eternal Body of Man' and 'God himself':

> It manifests itself in his Works of Art (In Eternity All is Vision)
> All that we See is Vision from Generated Organs gone as soon as come
> Permanent in The imagination; considered as Nothing by the Natural man. (CPPWB Lö 273).

While Woolf entertains the idea that ancient Greek tragedy endures, she does not hold to a Blakean idea of eternity, that is central to his idea of visionary art.

In 'A Vision of the Last Judgment' (1810), Blake writes: 'Vision is a Representation of what Eternally Exists. Really & Unchangeably' which he contrasts to fable and allegory, which he says are 'Formd by the Daughters of Memory' (CPPWB VLJ 554). Walter Benjamin's statement that allegory offers 'in the realm of thoughts what ruins are in the realm of things' defines the modernist relation to allegory.[510] There is perhaps scepticism, irony and exaggeration in Woolf's descriptions of the enduring artistic achievements of the ancient Greeks, meaning she might agree with Benjamin that allegory has ceased to work. By contrast Blake is absolutely devoted to the permanent value of Chaucer.

In 'Anon', returning to the preoccupations of 'On Not knowing Greek', Woolf again contrasts classical cultures and texts, both Latin and Hellenic, to Chaucer:

> There was no English literature to show up the change in the mind. Anon's song at the back door <The historian says, were barbarous> was as difficult for him to spell out as for us. & more painful. For they reminded him of his lack of intellectual ancestry. His intellectual pedigree only reached back to Chaucer, to Langland to Wycliffe. In order to have ancestors by way of the mind he must cross the channel his ancestors by way of the mind are the Greeks and Romans. (E VI 585).

[510] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), p. 178.

'Anon' is an example of the Blakean archetype I am trying to identify. 'Anon', who denotes oral poetic song culture, is enduring like the Canterbury Pilgrims. Above Woolf engages with the work of Elizabethan English historian William Harrison (1535-93). Harrison is an instance of the view of Chaucer Blake wants to challenge, because Harrison thinks Chaucer is too recent to be taken seriously.

Woolf and Blake on Edward Gibbon

Another highly influential writer of interest to both Woolf and Blake is the historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), famous for his monumental multi-volume *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1789). In the *Descriptive Catalogue*, Blake mentions Gibbon, when reacting against troubling enlightenment historians and philosophers of the eighteenth century:

> The reasoning historian, turner and twister of causes and consequences, such as Hume, Gibbon and Voltaire; cannot with all their artifice, turn or twist one fact or disarrange self-evident action and reality. Reasons and opinions concerning acts, are not history. Acts themselves alone are history, and these are neither the exclusive property of Hume, Gibbon nor Voltaire, Echard, Rapin, Plutarch, nor Herodotus. Tell me the Acts, O historian, and leave me to reason upon them as I please; away with your reasoning and your rubbish. (CPPWB DC 543-544).

As Charlotte Roberts observes, Gibbon came to represent a 'model of Enlightenment rationality.'[511] This is part of what irritates Blake. He challenges the idea there could be a single model of rationality. He believes that Gibbon distorts historical details by imposing 'reasons and opinions', when Gibbon's reader ought instead to be allowed to 'reason upon' 'causes and consequences' independently' As David Fallon notes, Blake was not entirely against 'Enlightenment critical practices', since he believed it could 'liberate humans from myths that sustained superstition and tyrannical authority.' [512] Yet Blake also considers myth to sometimes be 'an affirmation and expression of the creative and active energies of a free

[511] Charlotte Roberts, *Edward Gibbon and the Shape of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 12
[512] David Fallon, *Blake, Myth, and Enlightenment*: *The Politics of Apotheosis* (London: Palgrave, 2017), pp.1-2.

people.'[513] Blake is more interested in mythopoeia than mythography. He is more interested in the original creation of myth than in the objective and rationalised Enlightened study of myths.

In his autobiography, Edward Gibbon writes that his masterwork, the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* had been influential 'both at home and abroad', that it had 'struck root', meaning that whether for good or ill its influence may endure. He hoped that 'a hundred years hence' it would 'still continue to be abused.'[514] In 1889, one hundred years after the *Decline and Fall,* Pater shares Blake's concern with the Blakean question of the historical record being distorted by the enlightenment historian:

> Your historian, for instance, with absolutely truthful intention, amid the multitude of facts presented to him, must needs select, and in selecting assert something of his own humour, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within. So Gibbon moulds his unwieldy material to a preconceived view. Livy, Tacitus, Michelet, moving full of poignant sensibility amid the records of the past, each, after his own sense, modifies – who can tell where and to what degree? – and becomes something else than a transcriber; each, as he thus modifies, passing into the domain of art proper.[515]

Pater thinks the historian needs to develop a subjective viewpoint on historical fact. Pater's ideal historians resembles the Paterian aesthetic critic. Similarly, in his *Descriptive Catalogue* Blake suggests the historian needs 'spiritual agency' in order to articulate an authentic view of history, commenting cryptically: 'he who rejects a fact because it is improbable, must reject all History and retain doubts only' (CPPWB DC 544). Pater, however, appears more positive than Blake about the historian's individual 'sensibility' that 'moulds' a body of 'unwieldy material to a preconceived view.' Whereas Blake sees the Enlightenment historian

[513] Fallon, *Blake, Myth, and Enlightenment*: *The Politics of Apotheosis*, pp.1-2.
[514] Edward Gibbon, *Autobiography as originally edited by Lord Sheffield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), p. 212.
[515]Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 9.

turning away from the divine authority of ‘spiritual agency’, Pater believes that the Enlightenment historian becomes an artist.

Once more Pater is a source of continuity between Woolf and Blake. In 1937, in her essay ‘The Historian and the Gibbon’, Woolf follows Blake and Pater in discussing Gibbon. She opens this piece by quoting Gibbon’s autobiographical statement given above about *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Woolf quotes Gibbon to ‘confirm him’ in his ‘calm confidence of immortality’ by announcing that his famous history of the Roman Empire has ‘one quality of permanence’: ‘it still excites abuse.’ (E VI 81). Blake is part of the first audience of Gibbon’s work in the eighteenth century that challenges and/or misunderstands its aims.

Like Blake, Woolf thinks the historian must take responsibility for their own subjective view. Woolf is concerned that Gibbon denies agency to his historical subjects because his ‘pomposities of diction’ make the people he writes about: ‘so crudely jointed that they seem capable only of the extreme antics of puppets dangling from a string.’ (E VI 81-82). Woolf’s problem is Gibbon’s writing style as much his approach to history. She considers the task of constructing historical narrative on the scale of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to be equal to the novelist’s task. Again, I am not saying Woolf necessarily reads Blake on Gibbon, merely that it is interesting that both Woolf and Blake challenge Gibbon.

Woolf’s and Blake’s marginal annotation as a form of discourse

Unlike Blake, Woolf rarely annotates the margins of her books. As stated in the introduction to the catalogue of Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s library at Washington State University, Woolf usually makes ‘light marks in the margins or handwritten genealogies of

characters.'[516] There are almost no overt statements or comments in the volumes preserved from Woolf's library. Most of the annotations only indicate the passages that interest Leonard and/or Virginia Woolf. Blake by contrast is a prolific annotator.

However, as Hermione Lee notes, Woolf's reading notes amount to a personalised 'system of annotation.'[517] Woolf studies is indebted also to the research of Merry M. Pawlowski who explains Woolf's reading notebooks are an example of the commonplace book, traditionally used for 'compiling knowledge in a way unique to each individual' and often 'containing pithy fragments, phrases, and quotations.'[518] Blake's statement on the deadening effect of 'Natural Objects' is an example of such a quotation, recorded by Woolf for her personal interest in aesthetics.

In 'Writing in the Margin' (1906), a draft manuscript Woolf does not develop for publication, she explores how annotations in books might be understood as a form of discourse. [519] She describes marginalia as an expression of a desire 'so strong' that it overcomes 'the printed prohibition against any mark or annotation.'[520] Woolf is troubled by the annotators wish to remain 'anonymous', leaving a violating 'scrawl': 'his O, or his Pooh, or his ~~very true~~ Beautiful/ upon the unresisting sheet, as though the author received this man [?] upon his flesh.' [521] Woolf also notes manuscript annotators make the mistake of avoiding direct public debate, holding back from writing to a newspaper or sharing critical comment with the

[516] Diane Filby Gillespie, 'Introduction', *The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-Title Catalogue.* Julia King and Laila Miletic-Vejzovic (eds.), (Pullman: Washington State UP, 2003), p. xviii
[517] Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p, 412.
[518] Merry M. Pawlowski, 'Virginia Woolf and Scrapbooking', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the arts.*
[519] Virginia Woolf, 'writing in the margin'; reprinted in Amanda Golden, (ed.) 'Virginia Woolf's Marginalia Manuscript', *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 18 (2012), 109-117. This manuscript is preserved as part of the Monks House Papers: SxMsi8/2/A/A.23/C.
[520] Golden, 'Virginia Woolf's Marginalia Manuscript', (113).
[521] Ibid, (113).

'author himself.'[522] Therefore annotation is often the voicing of an opinion without taking the risk of being contradicted or challenged.

Yet this objection to marginalia does not apply to Blake, who shares his marginalia to Wordsworth with Henry Crabb Robinson, which means he rightly exposes his comments to debate. He is not an anonymous annotator. Rather, according to H. J. Jackson, Blake's marginalia exemplify an eighteenth-century convention that encouraged 'the circulation of manuscript notes as a way of disseminating personal opinions.' [523] This dynamic sharing of ideas through notes made on a manuscript, may have lent itself to the interests of Romantic poets. As Lawrence Lipking points out, marginalia were not 'considered publishable until the Romantics had encouraged a taste for fragments and impulses, the suggestive part rather than the ordered whole.'[524] Similarly, Jason Allen Snart thinks it is the lack of need for a 'unified system' of philosophical rationality that makes marginalia appealing to Blake. [525] Tilottama Rajan approves of Blake's marginalia when it 'gives up any notion of absolute truth.'[526]

While the practice of marginalia may change in the eighteenth century, Woolf thinks that in all periods, 'the love of annotating books', is 'one of the most/ permanent/ & vigorous instincts in the human mind.'[527] George Steiner echoes this when he describes an 'intellectual' as a 'human being who has a pencil in his hand or her hand when reading a book.'[528] Yet Woolf is not interested in the intellectual being a single individual authority. As

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[522] Ibid, (115)
[523]H. J. Jackson, *Romantic Readers: The Evidence of Marginalia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 170. See also, Jackson's book: *Marginalia: Reader's writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[524] Lawrence Lipking, 'The Marginal Gloss', *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 3 No. 4 (Summer, 1977), 609-655 (612).
[525] Jason Allen Snart, *The Torn Book: Unreading William Blake's Marginalia* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), p.11. See also John Benjamin Pierce, *The Wond'rous Art: William Blake and Writing* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), and (already cited) Hazard Adams, *Blake's Margins: An Interpretive Study of the annotations*.
[526] Tilottama Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.214
[527] Golden, 'Virginia Woolf's Marginalia Manuscript', (117).
[528] George Steiner, *No passion Spent: Essays 1978-1996* (London: Faber, 1996), p. 11

Leila Brosnan argues, Woolf's essays create a 'multitude of voices, each of which speaks to and comments upon the others.'[529] Lastly, as Amanda Golden writes, marginalia often help us identify 'one generation reading another.'[530] Though their historical difference means Woolf is unlikely to see Blake as part of an earlier generation, she does take an interest in Blake's marginalia that she shares with the Victorian generations, particularly with the essays of Pater and Emerson. All these fragmentary further continuities, Woolf and Blake both discussing Chaucer, both reflecting on Hellenism, both discussing Edward Gibbon's enlightenment historian, both being interested in marginalia, show that Woolf and Blake's relationship must be formulated as being partly transhistorical. This is another reason that Pater is useful to the study of Woolf and Blake. He is a critic necessary for contextualising Woolf's Blake, but also a possible model for understanding Woolf's and Blake's transhistorical relationship.

[529] Leila Brosnan, *Breaking the Surface of Silence: Reading Virginia Woolf's Essays and Journalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp.12-13.
[530] Amanda Golden, *Annotating Modernism: Marginalia and Pedagogy from Virginia Woolf to the confessional poets* (London: Routledge, 2020), p.1

8: Conclusion: an impression of Woolf's Blake

I have found that Blake is an interesting and resonant poet and painter to be taken seriously in Woolf studies. Woolf sees him as a kindred artist because of his talents in combining the visual and verbal arts, but also due to his achievements in independently owning the means of his artistic production. 'Seeing & writing' is Woolf's central aesthetic term for Blake, and 'Mental fight' is her political term. I have focused throughout on Blake as a poet and painter who makes interesting, if fleeting appearances across the decades of Woolf's fiction and essays, most explicitly in her essays, from 1904 through to 1940. I have also avoided reducing Woolf's Blake to any single characteristic, while also foregrounding the language Woolf uses to describe Blake.

My necessary focus on the literary critical opinions of Woolf's late nineteenth-century antecedents and her early twentieth-century peers, sometimes means it was also necessary not to represent sensible criticism. For example, Erich Auerbach on Romanticism and Classicism is far preferable to either T.E. Hulme or Walter Raleigh, because he shows that ever since the classical 'doctrine of the ancients regarding the several levels of literary representation – a doctrine which was taken up again by every later classicistic movement', there has been some form of tension between Romanticism and Classicism.[531] Both Blake and then subsequently Woolf are affected by this aesthetic tension.

One reason that scholars can only form an impression of Woolf's Blake is the relative absence of data, but Woolf's criticism often has a subversive aim. In 'Phases of Fiction' she encourages modes of interpretation that are 'suspicious of fixed labels and settled hierarchies.' (E V 42). Whereas for instance Chapter Six could easily have descended into

[531] Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Willard R. Task (trans.), (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 554. First published in German by A. Francke, Berne, Switzerland, 1946. 53. Auerbach writes on Woolf's representation of reality in her novel *To the Lighthouse* his twentieth chapter: The Brown Stocking' in *Mimesis*, pp.525-553.

critical discussion of who was more important to Woolf – Blake or Milton – I avoid a hierarchical view of poets that influence Woolf. As Christine Froula observes, a fundamental tenet of Bloomsbury philosophy is its insistence on 'provisional theory' that its ideas always remain openly 'debated and contested.'[532] Woolf's Blake, and Woolf's Blake within Bloomsbury, must also remain open to such reinterpretation. Not only since Bloomsbury's ideas are always sceptical and open to revision, but also because Blake believes contradiction to be useful. Woolf also writes positively about resisting definitive conclusions in *A Room of One's Own*.

In 'Flumina Amem Silvasque', 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', and the notes for 'Reading at Random. Or Turning the Page', Blake appeals to Woolf because his bold statements are often open to manifold interpretations. In Roger Fry's comments on Blake, both in 1886 and in 1904, there is a similar reluctance to reduce Blake. In 1886, as I argue above, Fry is anxious that by being idealised Blake's image will become fixed. Woolf, Fry, and Walter Pater all, in slightly different ways, understand it is not enough for Blake to be canonized as radical. Each period needs to renew what is radical about Blake according to the auspices and exigencies of its historical moment. Woolf's modernist response to Blake is formulated in a transitional phase of Blake studies and of Blake's reception. As a member of the Bloomsbury, Virginia Woolf was committed to a provisional, revisionary, and dialogical engagement with Blake. This is partly an ambivalence, but also an approach that Blake's complex radicalism necessitates. The modernists are not always able or willing to formulate an entirely clear view of Blake, which is also because they do not want to idealise him, nor do they want to assume his doctrinal views without scepticism. As Woolf scholars, nor should we make final statements on such radical visionaries as Virginia Woolf and William Blake.

[532] Christine Froula, *The Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p.xif

Appendix A: Chronology of key publication dates re Blake's reputation, Woolf's allusions to Blake, and Blake in the nineteenth and twentieth century

William Blake (1783-1827)

Virginia Woolf (1888-1941)

Note that for each entry, I note in square brackets where in the thesis it is discussed.

1863	Publication of Alexander Gilchrist's Blake biography: *Life of William Blake: Pictor Ignotus* [Chapter Two, section One].
	John Ruskin makes passing reference to Blake in the third volume of *Modern Painters*. Leonard and Virginia Woolf owned a copy of this volume [Chapter Two, Section One].
1865	In *Essays in Criticism: first series,* Matthew Arnold denounces all Romantic poets for their 'prematureness.' [Chapter Two, Section Two]
1868	Publication of Algernon Charles Swinburne's study: *William Blake: a Critical Essay,* in which Blake is at last celebrated as a modern and extremely innovative poet-painter [Chapter Two, section Two].
1870	Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, 'Inspiration', quotes Blake's marginalia to Wordsworth on 'Natural Objects.' [Chapter Two, Section Three].
1872	John Ruskin discusses Blake in his lecture 'Of Wisdom and Folly in Science', presented at the University of Oxford on 10 February 1872. [Chapter Two, Section Four].
	Walter Pater reviews Sidney Colvin's art historical study, *Children in Italian and English Design* (1872). On seeing facsimiles of Blake's

plates from the *Songs of Innocence* (1789), Pater observes Blake's 'singular mélange of design and verse' that creates 'bewildered beauties' and a 'peculiar mingling of sweetness and strangeness' [Chapter Two, Section Five]

1873 In *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873), Walter Pater uses Blake for his project as an 'aesthetic critic'. [Chapter Two, Section Five].

1874 Algernon Charles Swinburne expresses admiration for Blake's combination of visual and verbal form, thus anticipating Woolf's interest in 1940 in 'seeing & writing.' [Chapter Two, Section Five].

1876 Mary Carmichael writes musical scores for Blake's poetry: *Two Songs by William Blake;* for voice and piano. (London, Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co.) [Chapter Four, Section Four].

1880 Anne Gilchrist works with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his brother the Blake scholar William Michael Rossetti, and Frederick Shields, to produce a new edition of her husband, Alexander Gilchrist's biography of Blake [Chapter Two, Section Seven].

Frederick J. Shields and Dante Gabriel Rosetti sentimentally attempt to memorialise, in painting and poetry, the very last room, on the Strand, in which Blake lived and worked. [Chapter Two, Section Eight].

1882 Oscar Wilde mentions Blake in his lecture on 'The English Renaissance of Art' at the Chickering Hall, New York, 9 January, in which he engages with the aesthetics of Blake's 'bounding line' and admiring 'the simple directness of nineteenth-century prose' in Blake's

oft cited annotation to Reynolds: ‘to generalise is to be an idiot.’ [Chapter Two, Section Six].

1886 Anne Gilchrist’s short account of Blake’s life published in the fifth volume of the *DNB*, which is also represented in Woolf’s library. [Chapter Two, Section Seven].

Roger Fry gives a lecture on William Blake at King’s College, Cambridge, in which he laments the nineteenth-century reception of Blake. [Chapter Two, Section Eight].

Coventry Patmore writes that Emmanuel Swedenborg was an ‘artist of the Blake type’, but like ‘Blake on a colossal scale.’ [Chapter Two, Section Nine]

1889 In *Appreciations, with an essay on Style*, Pater returns to Blake, developing his ideas explored earlier in *The Renaissance*: *Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873) [Chapter Two, Section Nine].

1893 W.B. Yeats and Edwin J. Ellis published what was then the most ambitious edition of the complete Blake [Chapter Two, Section Nine].

1897 Yeats writes an essay on Blake. [Chapter Two, Section Nine].

1900 Blake is canonically anthologised in *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900*, edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch. [Chapter Three, Section Zero].

1902 James Joyce wonders whether Blake is the ‘most enlightened of western poets’ [Chapter Three, Section One].

1903 Yeats 1897 essay on Blake is reprinted in the essay collection, *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903), which contains numerous reflections on Blake, and of which Woolf owned a copy [Chapter Two, Section Nine].

1904 30 December, Woolf makes two sketches after Blake and, feeling encouraged by Vanessa Bell's praise, she writes to Violet Dickinson to discuss them. [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Woolf's Blake sketches in 1904'].

Roger Fry contributes an article in the Burlington Magazine about Blake: 'Three Pictures in Tempera'. [Chapter Three, Section Two].

1905 Publication of *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake*, edited by John Sampson, with an introduction by Walter Raleigh. [Chapter One, Section 1.1, headed 'Mental Fight in 1904'; 'Woolf's Blake sketches in 1904'; Chapter Two, Section Four]. On Raleigh's introduction to this volume see [Chapter Three, Section Three]

1906 Woolf's close friend, the Bloomsbury member, Lytton Strachey publishes a review of *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake* [Chapter Three, Section Three].

1908 Woolf mentions Blake in 'The Diary of a Lady-in Waiting', observing that the novelist Lady Charlotte Bury (1775-1861) considered Blake an 'eccentric little artist' who was 'full of imagination and genius' (E I 198). [Chapter one, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Flumina Amem Silvasque].

1909	In ‘Masques and Phases’, Woolf is sceptical of key nineteenth century critics who write about Blake. She writes that: ‘The Yellow Book, Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, with their distinction and their limitations are of yesterday, […] the pale shade of Walter Pater in their midst, controlling their revels’ (E VI 371) [Chapter Two, Section Six]
1910	In ‘Emerson’s Journals’ (1910), Woolf writes about the Emersonian imagination, implicitly in contrast to the Blakean, since the Emersonian is too controlled ‘upon a few things’ (E I 339). [Chapter Two, Section Three]
1911	T.E. Hulme’s lecture ‘Romanticism and Classicism’, denounces Romanticism, in favour of the constraining classical aesthetics that Hulme associates with Coleridge’s poetics of the ‘fancy’ [Chapter Three, Section Four].
1913	Major William Blake retrospective at the National Gallery of British Art (Tate Gallery) in London, which includes Blake’s watercolour illustrations to Milton’s dramatic poem *Comus* [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subheading: ‘Geoffrey Keynes and the Blake centenary (1927); Chapter Six, Section Five].
	Rehang of the permanent display in National Gallery of British Art (Tate Gallery) which prompts a sporadic debate about Blake and art history in *Nation & Athenaeum*. Woolf’s friend Roger Fry intervenes in this debate [Chapter Three, Section Five].

1915 Woolf publishes her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, which contains Blakean allusions to Milton's poem *Comus* (1634). [Chapter Six, sections Two, Four, and Five].

Woolf engages with pacifist ideas in 'Heard on the Downs: The Genesis of Myth' [Chapter Four, Section Four].

1916 28 March: first performance of the Jerusalem hymn in a concert for members of *Fight for Right* at the Queen's Hall London. [Chapter Four, Section Three].

Blake is anthologised by Robert Bridges, a member of *Fight for Right*, for imperialist propaganda in *The Spirit of Man: An Anthology in English & French from the Philosophers & Poets*. [Chapter Four, Section Three].

Publication of Walter Raleigh's book *Romance. Two Lectures.* which foregrounds Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (1783) in periodisation of Romanticism [Chapter Three, Section Six].

1917 In the *TLS*, 11 October, in 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' Woolf engages positively with Blake's bold statement in response to Wordsworth: 'Natural Objects *always did and do* weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in me!' Woolf subsequently recorded Blake's words on 'Natural Objects' in her notebook. [Chapter One, Section 1.2, subsection heading: 'Flumina Amem Silvasque].

Leonard and Virginia Woolf publish the first handprinted pamphlet from the Hogarth Press, *Two Stories,* contributing a story each,

juxtaposed with Blakean woodcut illustrations by Dora Carrington [Chapter Five, Section Five].

Woolf reviews Walter Raleigh's *Romance. Two Lectures*, for the *TLS* [Chapter Three, Section Six].

1918 Woolf's engages again with pacifism in 'War in the Village' (1918), thus anticipating an interest in Blake and peace in 1940. [Chapter Four, Section Four]

Francis Younghusband retrospectively explains why the *Fight for Right* group was necessary at the time of the Great War [Chapter Four, Section Three].

1919 On 31 July, E.M. Forster writes of Woolf's short stories 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917) and *Kew Gardens* (1919), in Blakean terms, stating that the 'very word vision (Latin video)' applies to Woolf as 'merely something that has been seen' [Chapter Three, Section Nine].

On 11 December, in 'The Intellectual Imagination', Woolf identifies Shelley and Blake as 'obvious instances of the visionary.' (E III 134) [Chapter One, Section 1.1., subsection heading: 'Woolf on Blake and Shelley in 1919 and 1934].

Woolf's short story *Kew Gardens* published by the Hogarth Press, with woodcut illustrations by Vanessa Bell [Chapter One, Section 1.1. subsection heading: 'Woolf's Blake sketches in 1904; Chapter Three, Section Nine].

T.S. Eliot wonders whether T.E. Hulme is not in fact ‘a really great poet’: ‘I can’t think of anything as good as two of his poems since Blake’ [Chapter Three, Section 7].

Leonard and Virginia Woolf publish T.S. Eliot’s *Poems*, typesetting and printing the text by hand [Chapter Three, Section Seven]

1920 T.S. Eliot’s essay on Blake is included in his collection *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, in which Eliot applies Mathew Arnold’s dismissal of Romantic poetry to Blake. [Chapter Three, Section Seven].

Roger Fry reprints his 1904 essay on Blake in *Vision and Design* [Chapter Three, Section Two]

1921 Woolf reviews Roger Fry’s *Vision and Design*, praising Fry’s search for a ‘system of aesthetics’ based on a ‘stream of pleasure.’ (E VI 388-89) [Chapter Three, Section Two].

In ‘Patmore’s Criticism’, Woolf accuses Patmore of unfairly dismissing Blake (E III 310) [Chapter One, Section 1.1. subsection heading: ‘Woolf versus Coventry Patmore on Blake in 1921’].

Woolf finishes her first short story collection, *Monday or Tuesday*, published by the Hogarth Press, with woodcut illustrations by Vanessa Bell. [Chapter One, Section 1.1, Subsection heading: ‘Woolf’s Blake sketches in 1904’; Chapter One Section 1.1., subsection heading: ‘After Gillespie: 1990 onwards’].

Geoffrey Keynes finishes editing the landmark *Bibliography of William Blake.*

T.S. Eliot blames Milton for effecting a 'dissociation of sensibility' that weakens subsequent periods in English poetry [First mentioned, Chapter One, Section 1.1., subsection heading '*To the Lighthouse'* (1927) and Blake's "bounding line"'; again, in Chapter Two, Section Nine; again, in Chapter Six, Section One].

1922 In 'The Modern Essay', Woolf writes that it is not 'knowledge' that gives Pater 'authority', but 'arduous' insistence on eradicating all 'extraneous matter' which allows the reader to perceive his 'vision' that gives his essays 'shape and intensity.' (E IV 217) [Chapter Two, Section Five].

Jacob's Room marks the beginning of Woolf's decision to publish all her fiction independently through the Hogarth Press, showing her Blakean commitment to owning the means of artistic production [Chapter Six, Section Three].

In January, T.S. Eliot shares with Ezra Pound the manuscript draft of *The Waste Land,* upon which Pound writes 'Blake.' [Chapter Three, Section Seven].

On June 12, Hart Crane claims that 'Blake, and a dozen others' are alluded to Eliot's first poetry collection, *Prufrock* (1917) [Chapter Three, Section Seven].

Strachey's review of *The Lyrical Poems of William Blake* (1905) is reprinted in an essay collection Woolf owned: *Books and Characters, French and English* [Chapter Three, Section Three].

1923 Hart Crane contrasts T.S. Eliot's 'erudition and technique' to Blake's 'rhythm and ecstasy.' [Chapter Three, Section Seven].

Leonard and Virginia Woolf typeset and publish, by hand, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1923).

1924 Woolf writes to T.S. Eliot about *The Sacred Wood*, stating that it made her question her own literary criticism, especially her *TLS* articles [Chapter Three, Section Seven].

Clive Bell contrasts Woolf to Blake in his review of Woolf's novel, *Night and Day* (1919): 'On Virginia Woolf's painterly vision', in *Dial* December 1924. [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Before Gillespie 1924-1982'].

1925 Woolf finishes *The Common Reader: First Series*, which includes two essays key to studying Woolf and Blake, 'Modern Fiction' and 'The Pastons and Chaucer.' In 'Modern Fiction' Woolf uses the Paterian image of the 'luminous halo', relevant to Blake's 'bounding line' [Chapter Three, section One]. 'The Pastons and Chaucer' pertains to Blake's statement on 'Natural Objects [Chapter Five, Section Three].

In 'How it Strikes a Contemporary', also published in *The Common Reader: First Series,* Woolf offers opinions on W.B. Yeats [Chapter

Two, Section Nine]; James Joyce [Chapter Three, Section one]; and D.H. Lawrence [Chapter Three, Section Ten].

In 'The Lives of the Obscure', also published in *The Common Reader: First Series*, Blake is described as a visionary 'man with very bright eyes.' [Chapter one, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Flumina Amem Silvasque].

Richard Hughes reviews *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), describing Woolf's character Septimus Warren Smith as a Blakean 'lunatic': 'A Day in London Life', *Saturday Review of Literature* (New York), 16 May. [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Before Gillespie 1924-1982'].

In *A Vision*, Yeats draws strength from Blake's philosophy, writing that Blake helped him understand 'the world as conflict.' [Chapter Two, Section Nine].

Leonard Woolf reviews a new volume of Blake's writing, edited by Geoffrey Keynes: *The Writings of William Blake* (3 Vols) [Chapter Three, Section Eight]

1926 In 'A Professor of Life', Woolf finds Raleigh's private comments on Blake 'unprofessional.' [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Woolf on Walter Raleigh and Blake in 'A Professor of Life (1926)'].

Leonard and Virginia Woolf receive a review copy of John Milton's *Comus* that includes black and white facsimiles of Blake's watercolour illustrations of *Comus* [Chapter Three, Section Eight; Chapter Six, Section Five]

George Macaulay Trevelyan's *History of England* (1926) mentions Blake as a poet who, like 'Burns and Wordsworth' turns against the 'rationalised and most academic' standards of the 'upper class', preferring 'the imagination of common folk.' [Chapter Three, Section Eight].

Woolf publishes *Le Temps Passe*, the midsection of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) in a translation by Charles Mauron [Chapter One, Section 1.1., subheading: '*To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Blake's "bounding line"'].

1927 William Blake centenary year.

Woolf finishes her novel *To the Lighthouse*, which attempts a Blakean engagement with 'seeing & writing.' [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: '*To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Blake's "bounding line."].

William Blake Centenary Exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, for which Woolf's friend Geoffrey Keynes was on the organising committee. [Chapter One, Section 1.1., subsection heading: 'Geoffrey Keynes and the Blake centenary (1927)'].

Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell collaborate on a limited edition of *Kew Gardens* from the Hogarth Press, for which Bell makes Blakean illustrations [Chapter One, section 1.1. subsection heading: 'Woolf's Blake sketches in 1904']

E.M. Forster writes *Aspects of Fiction*, engaging tentatively with Blake's preference for 'fourfold' over 'single vision.' [Chapter Three, section Nine].

Woolf reviews Aspects of Fiction in 'Is Fiction an Art?' [Chapter Three, section Nine].

In 'Ruskin Looks Back on Life' (1927), Woolf identifies Blakean specificity in Ruskin's literary and pictorial aesthetics: 'He revels in the description of changing clouds and falling waters, and yet fastens his eye to the petals of a daisy with the minute tenacity of a microscope' (E IV 503). [Chapter Two, Section Four]

In 'Poetry, Fiction and Future' Woolf reflects on the differences between modern poetry and that of the Romantic period [Chapter One, Section 1.1., subsection heading: '*To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Blake's "bounding line"'].

1929 Woolf writes *A Room of One's Own,* using the narrative voice of Mary Carmichael, the name of a Victorian composer who set Blake's poetry to music in 1876 [Chapter Four, Section Four].

In 'Introduction to these Paintings.' D.H. Lawrence writes that Blake is the only English painter of merit. [Chapter Three, Section Ten].

1930 November 8: Woolf describes her emotion at bidding Yeats farewell with a handshake: 'This is to press a famous hand.' (D III 329) They also discuss their differing views of Milton's great elegy 'Lycidas' (1638). [Chapter Two, Section Nine].

1931 31 July: first performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams's ballet in response to Blake's Book of Job engravings (1826), for which Geoffrey Keynes wrote the libretto, at the Cambridge Theatre in London. [Chapter Four, Section Four].

1932 In *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Memoir,* Winifred Holtby uses to explore Woolf's themes of androgyny, the visionary tradition, and social class. [Chapter One, Section 1.2, subsection heading: 'Before Gillespie, 1924-1982'].

1934 In *Walter Sickert: a Conversation,* Woolf uses Blake to explore Sickert as a highly visual painter [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Woolf on Blake and Shelley in 1919 and 1934'].

26 October: Woolf learns from Yeats that he mentions her novel *The Waves* (1931) in his introduction to his own play, *Fighting the Waves* (1934) [Chapter Two, Section Nine].

1938 In her feminist-pacifist treatise, *Three Guineas* Woolf describes 'the poison tree of intellectual harlotry' (TG 179), a quotation from Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794) [Chapter One, Section 1.2. subsection heading: 'After Gillespie: 1990 onwards'].

Woolf makes a Blakean engagement with American myth and culture in 'America, which I have never seen' (1938) [Chapter Four, Section Four].

Woolf begins to plan 'Reading at Random. Or Turning the Page', writing in her diary on 14 October that she wants to use her 'innumerable T.L.S. notes', for 'ranging all through English lit: as I've

read it & noted it during the past 20 years' (D V 180) [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: 'Flumina Amem Silvasque].

1939 Woolf is still potentially engaging with Pater's ideas on Blake, since she writes in her diary on 13 July, that she is using her spare time to 'read Pascal & Pater'. (D V 226). [Chapter Two, Section Five].

In 'Christopher Smart', David Jones adopts a Christian interpretation of Blake's Jerusalem hymn, which relates to 'Mental fight.' [Chapter Four, Section Five].

1940 15 May Woolf tests an earlier formulation of 'Mental fight' in her diary: 'This idea struck me: the army is the body: I am the brain. Thinking is my fighting' (D V 285). [Chapter Four, Section One].

21 October: In her pacifist essay 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', Woolf engages Blake's left-wing ideal of 'Mental fight.' [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: '"Mental fight" in 1940'; Chapter Four, sections one through Five].

In a notebook, under the heading 'Reading at Random. Or Turning the Page', Woolf makes a note on Blake and a 'connection between seeing & writing.' [Chapter One, Section 1.1, subsection heading: '"Seeing & writing" & "Nin Crot & Pulley" (1940)].

Woolf mentions Blake twice in *Roger Fry A Biography*. [Chapter One, Section 1.1., subsection heading: 'Woolf on Blake in *Roger Fry a Biography*']. Fry's criticism were a reference point for Woolf's reflections in 1940 on Blake and 'seeing & writing.' [Chapter Three, Section Two].

When compiling her notebook that mentions Blake and ‘seeing & writing’, Woolf makes passing reference to George Macaulay Trevelyan’s *History of England* (1926), a work where Macaulay Trevelyan mentions Blake [Chapter Three, Section Eight].

Appendix B: Blake Volumes in Woolf's library

Collated from King, Julia and Miletic-Vejzovic, Laila (eds.), *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-title Catalogue.* Washington (Washington State University Press), 2003.

Available online:

http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/onlinebooks/woolflibrary/woolflibraryonline.htm

[accessed 2nd November, 2020]

I include a contents page for most of the Blake volumes Woolf owned to show which Blake texts were included in these editions, excepts for *Poetical Sketches*. Leonard and Virginia Woolf owned a facsimile of the original 1783 meaning their text was mostly unaffected by editorial interventions. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is more heavily represented than any other of Blake's works. Blake occasionally rearranges the order of the plates for different printings of *Songs*. Woolf and Blake scholars alike can consult the exact arrangements in the volumes in Woolf's library.

The Lyrical Poems of William Blake. John Sampson (ed.) Walter Raleigh (intro). Oxford (Clarendon), 1905.

CONTENTS

Poems of William Blake: Comprising Songs of Innocence and of Experience, together with Poetical Sketches and Some Copyright Poems Not in any Other Edition. Anne Thackeray Ritchie—signer. London (B. M. Pickering) 1874.

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POETICAL SKETCHES.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Poetical Sketches. Noel Douglas Replicas. Facsimile of the 1783 N. Douglas (ed.) London., 1926.

John Milton, *Comus: A Mask. From the edition of 1645*. by Darrell Figgis (ed. and pref), William Blake (illus.). Review copy. London (Benn), 1926.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience: Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul, Richard Herne Shepherd (ed.) [New and enl. edn.]. London (B. M. Pickering) 1868.

CONTENTS.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

William Blake. [Augustan Books of Modern Poetry]. London (E. Benn), 1925.

CONTENTS

Appendix C: Additional volumes from Woolf's library of relevance to her interest in Blake and Romanticism

Collated from King Julia, and Miletic-Vejzovic, Laila (eds.), *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-title Catalogue*. Washington (Washington State University Press), 2003.

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