

## REVIEW

*The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and Contemporary Global Literature*. By Jeanne Dubino, Paulina Pająk, Catherine W. Hollis, Celiese Lypka & Vara Neverow (eds.), Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 465.

Reviewed by Dominika Buchowska (Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

“As a woman, I have no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world” (TG, 206–207) – this statement by Virginia Woolf from *Three Guineas* gains a special significance in the context of *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and Contemporary Global Literature*, a new publication from Edinburgh University Press (2021), a collection of twenty-three essays edited by Jeanne Dubino, Paulina Pająk, Catherine W. Hollis, Celiese Lypka & Vara Neverow. In this formidably learned and wittily expressed volume Virginia Woolf with her innovative experimental style, feminism, political views, trauma is shown as a foremother, literary inspiration, and tutor to several generations of writers worldwide. Following in Woolf’s footsteps, these writers engage with the marginalized voices of women in search of a room of their own across the globe, including the subalterns alongside those in Manhattan.

In accordance with the latest trend in modernist studies – the planetary approach, which rejects the so far dominant position of the North-West in favour of a more global take, the book explores Woolfian legacies within local and national specificities, intricacies, and paradoxes. Monica Letham in her chapter notes that “Woolf’s Clarissa Dalloway has become a global character transformed by different locations and cultures” (p. 3) becoming an icon that has been explored, appropriated, copied, and transformed through practices of intertextuality, transtextuality, paratextuality, and hypertextuality. This could well be extended to include Woolf herself, her life and oeuvre which keep reemerging in their many manifestations, in many literary forms and genres.

The chapters in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and Contemporary Global Literature* analyse the reception, interpretation, and transformation of Woolf’s work in different cultures yet situating its impact in planetary and global contexts, revealing how motivating Woolf has been for writers across the globe. One of the book’s main strengths is its international

extent which shows how universal and prevalent Woolf's works have become in their many (re)translations, (relaunched) editions, (re)readings, adaptations, transformations, and other forms of encounters since the time they were originally published. The contributors explore the many approaches of the critics, translators, censors, editors, publishers, academics, students as well as common readers to Woolf and her prose. The contributors' new readings of Woolf's works in different geopolitical contexts show how valid her ideas and "creative courage" have remained in countries which struggle with women's rights, the domination of a patriarchal system, censorship, as well as totalitarian regimes and their imposed restrictions of freedom. Woolf's rejection of the concept of war in *Three Guineas*, her manifestations of female unrestricted creativity in *A Room of One's Own* as well as female sexuality in *Orlando* have been reinterpreted in modern literature, making their appearance in the form of gender aesthetics, third- and fourth-wave feminism, biofiction, and gender studies.

One indisputable strength of the collection is its focus on planetary understandings of Woolf's impact, which disrupts the so far dominant trend in Woolf studies that focused primarily on the transatlantic connections privileging the British and American contexts. By offering contributions from all continents, these essays challenge the centre and periphery binary and thus they promote global and transnational understandings of Woolf's reception and legacy.

The editors have usefully organized their collection into two parts. The first part "Planetary and Global Receptions of Woolf", which is arranged chronologically, presents the ways in which Woolf's works were received and translated, showing how differently Woolf functions "as a hypercanonical, countercanonical and shadow canonical figure in different cultures of the world" (p. 5). The chapters in second part of the volume "Woolf's Legacies in Literature" move geographically from the Global South, through the Global East and North, to the Global West, and they explore Woolf's presence in modern and contemporary world literature.

The book deserves praise also for its methodological diversity in terms of its multifaceted and interdisciplinary approaches to literature, discussing biofiction, neocosmopolitanism, ecocriticism, cosmofeminist novels, multigenre literary forms, and "born-translated" works (p. 5).

The introduction maps Woolf's global publications, tracing her entry into the international book market, including first editions, distributions, translations, followed by first studies and critical publications, international academic conferences, as well as associations established to honour, study, and propagate her work.

In Chapter One, "What a curse these translators are!" Woolf's early German reception", Daniel Göske & Christian Weiß engagingly discuss Woolf's initial reception in Germany, which they reveal as "a complex and little-known story"

(p. 26). They analyse how her work was “transferred, translated and sometimes transformed”, bringing forth the problems that early translators had with Woolf’s avant-garde style, especially structural discontinuities, sudden changes in perspective, free indirect speech, and stream of consciousness. These were exacerbated by her reluctance to respond to the translators’ queries, and indifference to foreign translations of her work which Woolf noted in her diary, adding that “to record my books [sic] fates slightly bores me” (p. 27). In spite of the early enthusiasm over Woolf’s work, with Vita Sackville-West assuring Woolf that she was the “idol of the Berlin intelligentsia” (p. 25), her early reception in Germany was brought to an abrupt stop by the Nazis, who saw her work as degenerating.

Communism, with its broad censorship, also shaped and disrupted the reception of Woolf in Romania, discussed by Adriana Varga in her chapter “The translation and reception of Virginia Woolf in Romania (1926–89)”, providing a fascinating look at the translation and censorship of *Orlando: A Biography*. She notes that in the early days Woolf’s prose was available to Romanians in French, yet after the Second World War, as the country descended into Communism, translations of Western literature into Romanian were strictly forbidden. Yet it was only after Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power that the ban was seemingly lifted and translations of many Western authors, including Woolf, flourished. However, as Varga aptly demonstrates, the loosening of restrictions was only superficial and was merely a “deceptive ploy” (p. 42) which, as she explains, led to “a much more insidious, all-pervasive, ‘Orwellian’ form of censorship” (p. 43). Paradoxically, however, in spite of the censor’s omnipresent eye, these translations became cunning ways of resistance and tools to combat Communist policy. Varga cleverly connects these practices with Woolf’s own struggles to deal with censorship in England – still shrouded in its post-Victorian prudish morality during her lifetime.

Suzanne Bellamy in “The reception of Virginia Woolf and modernism in early twentieth-century Australia” opens a window onto the ways in which Woolf’s reception was shaped by a network of opposing pro- and anti-modernist influences in Australian academia and intellectual life. Through the lens of Woolf’s feminism and pacifism, which were the focus of her reception in Australia in the early phase, she also shows how *Three Guineas* in particular was mocked, depoliticised, and recontextualised on the pages of Australian magazines and newspapers. Bellamy also mentions Australian writers who were influenced by Woolf in their work, including Patrick White, Eleanor Dark, and Christine Stead. Most interestingly, however, she brings to light the impact of Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group, as well as that of Roger Fry’s Omega Workshops on Australian visual artists, Grace Cossington Smith, Thea Proctor, and Margaret Preston, who eagerly embraced the experimental methods of Post-Impressionism in their work.

Cristina Carluccio explores the complex relationship between Woolf and Victoria Ocampo, Argentinian writer and intellectual. Carluccio contextualizes her arguments heavily on the geopolitical and cultural gap between these two women as a way to define this relationship, which also came to be seen as satisfying the hunger each of them had for the other's "otherness". With Latin American eagerness for cosmopolitanism in particular, this relationship acquired a very unique meaning, especially for Ocampo. Seen as "Deseo de mundo" (p. 80) – a desire for the world, a cultural phenomenon shared by many South American countries in the early twentieth century, or in other words the abovementioned hunger, it can be interpreted as a desire for intellectualism, publicity, and free movement across borders, across genders, across nations. Ocampo tried to embrace it through her literary magazine *Sur*, which introduced the Argentinian public to a variety of international (modernist) texts. Hunger is also a trope in the letters exchanged by the two writers, and it is likewise the focus of Ocampo's critical writing on Woolf in *Sur*, as well as her major work "Carta a Virginia Woolf" [Letter to VW] and her *Testimonios*. The essay is at times a little confounding in its attempt to explain the intricacies between the two writers' writing, which admittedly are labyrinthine. Focusing on "the reciprocal fascination", "desires", and the enthusiasm of both writers towards each other, Carluccio mentions "divergencies" and "inequality", referring to the relationships between the two authors as "asymmetrical" and "uneven" with respect to their different geographical locations and sometimes different views on feminism (p. 79); yet she does not mention Woolf's somewhat indifferent attitude manifested by the fact that Ocampo's attraction to Woolf's writing was never fully reciprocated, and while Ocampo devoured Woolf's works, the latter only read a few pages of the former's critical essays. Yet, as Carluccio interestingly observes, Woolf also endorsed Ocampo's project of translating Woolf's novels into Spanish, offering her support, involvement, and advice. Argentinian translations by Jorge Luis Borges were limited not only to the South American readers but worldwide to the whole Spanish-speaking community, which elevated Argentina's position from a peripheral to a central cultural location supporting the new modernist literature, a periphery to a centre.

In his chapter "From Julia Kristeva to Paulo Mendes Campos: Impossible conversations with Virginia Woolf", Davi Pinho creates an imaginary conversation between Woolf, Kristeva, and Campos about writing and life, in the context of Woolf's suicidal death in 1941. Relying on the theory of signature, he uses "Virginia Woolf" as a paradigm that functions differently in Kristeva's *About Chinese Women* (1974) where it stands for "depression and suicide" (p. 98) and in Campos' *Diário da Tarde* where it signifies the affirmation of life. Pinho illuminatingly reveals how Woolf and her signature can be re-read in different cultural-historical contexts, inspiring new understandings. He crafts

conversations between the three authors: when in Kristeva and Campos's work the name Woolf appears, he stops and inserts Woolf's own words that are referred to in the original text, creating a new context for the "Virginia Woolf" signature. Accordingly, he argues that today her overpowering "prolific and intensely life-affirming" (p. 98) work cannot be overshadowed by "Virginia Woolf" which, to some, represents depression and death.

A cross-temporal encounter between Virginia Woolf and Christa Wolf, a writer from the German Democratic Republic, is the subject of Henrike Krause's chapter "*Three Guineas* and the *Cassandra* Project, Christa Wolf's reading of Virginia Woolf during the Cold War". What Wolf shared with Virginia Woolf was writing under similar pressures from the political world, and the chapter shows in detail how Wolf, under the threat of the Cold War, wrote her *Cassandra* project, in which she wanted to show "how literature could intervene in the conflict" and can be treated as "peace research", reflecting an increased participation from female writers and an enhanced role of women in literature (p. 118). Studies on Wolf's preparatory work for this project reveal her intense reading of Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own* during that time, her marking and underlining of whole passages tackling the issue of pacifism infused with feminism, revealing a connection between Woolf's attempts to 'prevent war' as shown in her novel, abolishing patriarchy which she blamed for military conflict, and enabling women to access higher education and professions, and Wolf's ideas developed in the *Cassandra* project. Krause also discusses Wolf's interest in Woolf's writing techniques, especially freedom from any narrative constraints and her experimental style, and their shared belief that "only new forms in literature could address 'the needs' of their audiences and readers in times of political upheaval" (p. 121). Krause offers a fascinating description of Wolf's role in advocating for the publication of Woolf's works behind the Iron Curtain, in spite of official disapproval of modernist literature, revealing her thriving interest in Woolf's novels, an impressive collection within her own library – which housed many "forbidden" modernist books – as well as risk-imbued incorporation of Woolf's influences into her own literary works.

In "Virginia Woolf's literary heritage in Russian translations and interpretations", Maria Bent exposes Woolf's troubled reception and recognition in the USSR and her tardy translation into Russian because of the Soviets' fear of Western influences. Although Woolf remained untranslated, her work was not entirely unknown to Russian intellectuals. Bent mentions the crucial role of Anatoly Luncharsky, writer, critic, and translator, as well as People's Commissar for Education (1917–1929), through whose rather liberal views on art and literature, the Russian public was allowed to have access to Western literature, including Woolf, during the challenging era of Communist propaganda. She also discusses the role of Margarita Rudomino, the founder and first Director (1922–

1973) of the All-Russian State Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, who managed to set up the first library for foreign literature in Moscow despite the restricted contacts with the enemy's cultural influences. Together with the Association of Translation of Fiction, a part of the Union of Soviet Writers, established alongside the library, these institutions lay foundations for first ever translations of foreign literature into Russian, only commencing in the mid-1970s. The 1920s and 1930s are shown as particularly open to foreign cultural and literary influences in comparison with later limitations and extreme censorship measures, imposed by the Bolsheviks during the Great Terror which claimed the lives of millions, not sparing translators, writers, and intellectuals.

As Raili Marling persuasively discusses in "Virginia Woolf's feminist writing in Estonian translation culture", for the Estonian public it was Woolf's feminism and not her modernist extravaganza that was unacceptable in the post-1989 period, which welcomed the beginning of translations into Estonian. The problem of accepting, embracing, and supporting the feminist cause and gender equality in Estonia were related to the Soviet vague understanding of the issues which, as Marling claims, were "preached but not practiced" and reduced to mere "rhetoric" (p. 153). Marling provides a strong view of how Woolf's feminism has been mediated in Estonian translations, in which it has had to encounter unequivocal antifeminist propaganda. Attributing to translations a power to transform cultures Marling ponders whether feminist ideas can succeed in a context where they are unwelcome and scorned from the outset, whether feminism via translations can enter and remain within the Estonian cultural space. As she argues, Estonian translations of Woolf's work have contributed to domesticating gender equality for the Estonian public where feminism is regarded with suspicion, reminiscent of the Soviet era, and has long been "an intimidating Other" (p. 161).

Hala Kamal's chapter, "Virginia Woolf in Arabic: A feminist paratextual reading of translation strategies", analyses the translations of Woolf's writings in Arabic in the context of modernism and feminism. She observes that in the late 1960s Woolf's fiction was translated exclusively by male translators, while her critical writings, two decades later – by female ones, which enhanced the feminist reading of Woolf's non-fiction writing. Woolf's feminism is compellingly explored through the translations' paratextual paradigms which reinforce the feminist reading of her work in a situation when translations are imprecise.

In "Solid and living: The Italian Woolf Renaissance" Elisa Bolchi emphasizes the role of common readers in the rebirth of interest in Woolf's work in Italy since 2011 when the copyright for Woolf's oeuvre expired, thus opening up the possibilities for new translations, new readings, and new readers. Yet Woolf has been strongly present on the Italian literary market since her work was first translated in the 1930s, enjoying iconic popularity and reverence. The chapter analyses "three main paths" (p. 184) which characterized the publication

dynamics of Woolf's work in Italy: retranslations of her major fiction by mainstream publishers, translations of her previously unpublished work, as well as publication of de-luxe editions. Using interviews with publishers, translators, and literary agents as her major tool to gather data for further analysis, Bolchi investigates and characterises the readership of Woolf's works which given their widespread publications and increased availability, was broadened and more inclusive.

As Jeanne Dubino writes in "Tracing *A Room of One's Own* in sub-Saharan Africa, 1929–2019", Woolf is strongly present in the sub-Saharan consciousness largely through the work of contemporary expat writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Fiona Melrose, Helen Oyeyemi, or NoViolet Bulawayo, all of whom have been inspired by Woolf's oeuvre, rereading and rewriting her works from the sub-Saharan African perspective. Yet her work is nearly absent in mainland sub-Saharan Africa because of the legacy of colonialism and its implications. Woolf is not included in the syllabi of African universities, her work is rarely published, unavailable in bookshops and in libraries, mainly because as Dubino claims "colonialism made educational publishing the model for the book industry" as "the colonial cultural machinery had not been interested in cultivating African literary culture or reading for pleasure" (p. 209) which Woolf would have formed a part of. However, Woolf is not entirely unknown in sub-Saharan Africa. In spite of these barriers, out of all Woolf's works *A Room of One's Own* has come to be perceived as most popular in this part of the world, because as Dubino convincingly argues, it includes so many passages that are "quotable" (p. 211) especially in cultures which are predominantly oral and thus cherish proverbs and aphorisms, as well as because of the practical advice it gives to writers. Importantly the chapter mentions single instances of Woolf's presence in Africa, for example the story of the political activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who was imprisoned in Kenya where he was chained, kept in confinement, tortured, and deprived of basic human rights. Yet while there he wrote his masterpiece *Devil on the Cross* inspired by Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.

The second part of the volume is entitled "Woolf's Legacies in Literature", and explores the variety of ways in which Woolf's life and work influenced writers internationally. In order to outweigh the dominance of the global north-west, this section starts with the Global South and East before it moves on to the North and West.

In her chapter "Virginia Woolf's enduring presence in Uruguay" Lindsey Cordery discusses the early impact of Woolf on Uruguayan modernism through her publications in the magazine *Sur*. Yet Woolf's presence is most strongly felt in the fiction of two modern Uruguayan writers, Armonía Somers and Antonio Larreta. Crucially, Cordery finds analogies between Somers' anti-Catholic, sexually explicit, anti-bourgeois fiction, in particular her novel *La mujer desnuda*

(1950) [The Naked Woman] and Woolf's *Orlando*. Alongside ideological echoes from Woolf's novel, there are also more direct references when Somers quotes Woolf, refers to her, or talks to her in fictional conversations. Antonio Larreta was both fascinated and haunted by Woolf's life which, as Cordery asserts, is evident in his work. *El sombrero chino*, for instance, addresses homosexual desire, attraction within the family, same-sex seduction, love, and death.

Woolf continues to resonate in the work of contemporary Uruguayan feminist avant-garde writers, namely Cristina Peri Rossi, Alicia Migdal, Fernanda Trías, and the poet María Sánchez. Indeed, "reverberations" (p. 237) as coined by Gérard Genette, are explored as a theme – the connection that exists between a newer text with an earlier text without directly quoting or openly referring to it, though without the predecessor text the new one would lose its value and some of its meaning.

When analyzing Alicia Migdal's feminist fiction, which is shown to be heavily inspired by Woolf's work, particularly *A Room of One's Own*, Cordery discusses Migdal's gendered style of writing, which she refers to as a "female language" (p. 239). although it would be useful if she explained what she meant by that term specifically.

Maria A. de Oliveira's "Virginia Woolf's reception and impact on Brazilian Women's literature" reveals how immensely profuse Woolf's influence on contemporary Brazilian women writers has been. These authors, as de Oliveira claims, infuse Brazilian cultural and literary traditions with Woolf's aesthetic and political dialogues, her feminist ideas, and modernist experimentation. Using the concept of "the mobility of texts" (p. 247) she shows how these female authors share with Woolf, e.g., the idea of the male-controlled order being imposed on women and restricting their (creative) freedom. Tetrá de Teffé, Lucia Miguel Pereira, Clarice Lispector, Carolina Maria de Jesus, Ana Cristina Cesar, Lygia Fagundes Telles, Hilda Hilst, Sônia Coutinho, Adriana Lunardi, and Hilda Gouveia de Oliveira are all inspired chiefly by Woolf's feminism and political thinking. Interestingly these younger generation writers also follow Woolf in their experimental style of writing, playing with language, "transforming writing in mischievous ways, with more humour and eroticism, as if by liberating their writings, they were also freeing their bodies from patriarchal constraints and finding their voices" (p. 263). They are shown to be cleverly balancing between embracing Woolf's modernist Britishness and echoing Brazil's colonized mind.

In "English and Mexican dogs: Spectres of traumatic pasts in Virginia Woolf's *Flush* and María Luisa Puga's *Las razones del lago*", Lourdes Parra-Lazcano enters the highly original sphere of animal behavior. Asking new questions about the transference of emotions and experiences between dogs and humans, she draws analogies between the spaniel Flush in Woolf's novel and stray dogs Novel and Relato in Puga's novel. Parra-Lazcano focuses on the past traumatic



experiences of these dogs that are manifested in their dreams reemerging in the form of “spectral presences” (p. 267). Novel and Relato roam the streets of Zirahuén, befriending humans, yet become increasingly traumatized as a consequence of witnessing both dogs and humans dying in Zirahuén as well as life in confinement in Mexico City. Flush on the other hand is a dog living in Victorian London, given to the writer Elizabeth Barrett Browning and experiencing her illness, his kidnapping, their moving to Italy, return to London and so on. Parra-Lazcano takes an evolutionary perspective based on species interactions in which animals are treated as objects who are capable of experiencing trauma. Both Woolf and Puga analyse traumatic experiences in different cultural settings, and in both novels, the dogs’ traumatic behaviors reappear in their “dreams, compulsive actions, or inadvertent reenactments” (p. 268), differences in their experiences reflecting the changes in spatiotemporal, social, and cultural contexts and different attitudes to dogs in England and in Mexico.

Hogara Matsumoto in “A new perspective on Mary Carmichael: Yuriko Miyamoto’s novels and *A Room of One’s Own*” analyses the impact of Woolf on literature in Japan through the lens of Miyamoto’s work, showing that Woolf’s feminist ideas were largely unattainable for Japanese women. Miyamoto’s fiction, in particular her critical essay *Women and Fiction* (1948), which offers a literary historical approach of Japanese women writers and their “unexpressed voice”, (p. 282) shows, as Matsumoto convincingly argues, extensive influence of Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*. Woolfian inspiration continues in her novel *Road Signs* (1948–1951), in which Miyamoto draws some contrasts between Woolf’s character Mary Carmichael from *A Room of One’s Own* and modern Asian female heroines. Through her critical re-reading of the figure of Mary Carmichael, Miyamoto analyses “the protagonist’s sense of subjectivity [which] is explored through a metahistorical, international view of feminism” (p. 282). After travelling to Moscow and Western Europe, where she observes class and gender inequalities, which she then projects on to Asian societies, the main protagonist is prompted to conjure up new manners of approaching feminism and modernity in Japan, where women’s liberation and equality with men remain in the sphere of the distant future. The most interesting aspect of this chapter is Miyamoto’s critical understanding of the elitist and bourgeois dimension of Woolf’s life and work, which as Matsumoto explains, is related to Miyamoto’s involvement with Communism and the Proletarian Cultural Movement in Japan.

Chen Ran, a contemporary Chinese poet, openly acknowledges that “she is a disciple of Woolf” (p. 298), as Zhongfeng Huang discusses in her chapter “Rooms of their own: A cross-cultural voyage between Virginia Woolf and the contemporary Chinese woman writer Chen Ran”. Chen Ran’s poetry came to critical attention during the 1990s when China opened up its economic and social policy, loosening up its restrictions on contacts with the West. In such a context

Woolf's works started to gain increasing popularity, receiving frequent rereading, retranslation, and reinterpretation. This coincided with the concept of the new, open-minded woman emerging in Chinese society, who was sexually liberated, free from men's dominance and family demands, and open to the new opportunities that China was offering. Yet Chen Ran felt alienated within this strikingly modern and transformed society, as Zhongfend Huang rightly observes, retreating into a room of her own where she could freely express her experiences. Exactly such a figure represents a heroine of Chen Ran's poetry. As the chapter reveals, Woolf inspired Chen Ran on three different levels: feminism's theoretical frameworks, Woolf's concept of androgyny, and Woolf's call for women's writing. Chen Ran thus develops a concept of "gender-transcendent consciousness" which involves subjective perception, introspection concerning sexuality and bodily consciousness, androgyny, and female writer's independence in which "a room of one's own" means so much more than just the actual space, becoming "a symbol of safety, independence and a guarantee of life" (p. 299).

The Chinese motif continues in Justyna Jaguścik's chapter, "In search of spaces of their own: Woolf, feminism and women's poetry from China", which discusses contemporary Chinese women's poetry and gender-perceptive criticism inspired largely by Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, particularly motivated by the influence of Woolf's essay in China's reformist intellectual circles as well as women's rights movements. Woolf's thoughts on feminism, women's writing, and the recurrent metaphor of the room are prevalent in Chinese verse by poets such as Zhai Yongming, Zhang Zhen, Lu Yimin, Huang Xi, Wang Xiaoni, and Zhai Yongming. Crucially, to underscore the gender-aware nature of this poetry, Jaguścik also reflects on the importance of the magazine *Wings*, "the female voice in poetry" (p. 309), which since 1998 has provided Chinese women poets, writers, critics, and translators with a platform or "a utopian space" (p. 315) in which they can publish their work irrespective of the mainstream literary canon where feminist sensibilities are not respected.

Paulina Pająk's "Trans-dialogues: Exploring Virginia Woolf's feminist legacy to contemporary Polish literature" examines twenty-first century Polish novels, tracing their innovative form to Woolf's impact while looking at them from transnational, transgender, and transdisciplinary (transtextual, transdialogic) viewpoints. Woolf's presence is discussed in the works of Joanna Bator, Sylwia Chutnik, Marta Konarzewska, Renata Lis, Izabela Morska, Maria Nurowska, and Olga Tokarczuk. As Pająk demonstrates, these women writers on the basis of transtextuality enter into dialogues with Woolf on many levels, recasting some of her characters. Using Gérard Genette's theory of transtextuality and his distinction between intertextuality, paratextuality, and hypertextuality as well as Jessica Berman's theory of trans critical optic, Pająk studies Woolf's legacy in

contemporary Polish biofiction. With these inter- and transtextual echoes in mind Woolf, her characters, and motifs gain a second life in a wide repertoire of contemporary novels by referencing Woolf herself, *The Waves* and *Orlando*, but particularly Clarissa Dalloway

On the one hand these intertextual and dialogic elements of Woolf's work that Pająk discovers in contemporary Polish literature are fascinating, yet at times the author's emphasis on the Woolf connection and her attempts to unearth it make the readings of these novels slightly bizarre, obscure, and surreal.

Monica Latham takes Woolf to twenty-first-century London, Paris, and Sydney in her chapter "Clarissa Dalloway's Global Itinerary: From London to Paris and Sydney". Examination of the appropriation strategies used in contemporary novels incorporating Clarissa Dalloway as the impersonation of their own characters, highlights how vivid and influential *Mrs Dalloway* as a novel along with its title character and Woolf's style of writing are in contemporary literary consciousness. Latham goes beyond "Dalloway-esque" (p. 354) themes and incorporates in her study technical, stylistic, and narrative experiments, as well as elements that are uniquely Woolfian, such as stream of consciousness, unreliable narration, subjective points of view, shifts in perspectives and time, alternative settings, interior monologues, and impressionist effects, to name just a few. As Latham asserts, authors such as Anne Korkeakivi, Carole Llewellyn, and Gail Jones "weave into their prose fabric many such idiosyncratic Woolfian features, but they also make them new by adapting them to contemporary needs, settings and situations" (p. 355). Korkeakivi's novel *An Unexpected Guest* mirrors Clarissa Dalloway with a character named Clare, whose female voice has been erased by the male-dominated world, and who thus becomes transparent. Just as *Mrs Dalloway* can be read as criticism of British imperialism, Korkeakivi's prose takes on the issue of terrorism in the Parisian post-9/11 world. Carole Llewellyn's *Une ombre chacun* adapts the themes of Woolf's novel by modelling her characters, the twins Clara and Steven, on Clarissa and Septimus, in a deep exploration of life, death, impact of the past upon the present, trauma, madness, and suicide. Gail Jones's *Five Bells*, based on intertextual connections with Woolf's prose, explores the lives of characters experiencing a busy day in Sydney, revealing their thoughts around Dalloway-esque themes such as death, memory, trauma, and time. Interestingly, as Latham notes, the plot is of secondary importance, allowing the author to explore the workings of the minds of the main heroes through the stream of consciousness, interior monologue techniques, and shifts in temporality.

Anne-Laure Rigeade, in "Virginia Woolf and French writers: Contemporaneity, idolisation, iconisation" addresses the impact of Woolf on French literature by constructing "a typology of attitudes towards Woolf's work that lays the foundations of a theory of influence" (p. 371). Spanning the past century, Rigeade methodically analyses the work of three French novelists Natalie Sarraute, Anne

Bragance, and Cécile Wajsbrot from the perspectives of contemporaneity, idolization, and iconisation. Sarraute, who was Woolf's contemporary, similarly "chose to explore the thick darkness of an interior life concealed under the surface" (p. 373). In her appropriation of Woolf's style, she recreates her reception by the French readers dating back to the 1920s, which emphasizes the importance of the English author's experimental writing. Anne Bragance becomes an idol of Woolf's feminism in her *Virginia Woolf ou la dame sur le piédestal* (Virginia Woolf or the Lady on the Pedestal) (1984), while Cécile Wajsbrot's novel *Une Vie à soi* (A Life of Her Own), is concerned with a young journalist's fascination with Woolf as a woman and as a writer.

The female writers discussed vividly in Patricia Laurence's "The dream work of a nation: From Virginia Woolf to Elizabeth Bowen to Mary Lavin" are shown to be listening to Woolf's encouragement for other women to follow the idea of "a recurring dream that has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time; the dream of peace, the dream of freedom" (p. 388). Both these writers lived through the turmoil of the Second World War, yet as Laurence clearly notes, just like Woolf they remained pacifists, believing one should "fight with the mind" (p. 389) rather than with weaponry. Most war-themed and nationalist literature of the time was largely written by men, so their creative contribution criticising their own societies in the context of war enlarges this feminist aspect of literature, adding to it an Irish sensitivity. In their writing both Bowen and Lavin, just like Woolf, highlighted the importance of detail, of little things that are otherwise left unattended, unnoticed usually relegated to the background, in keeping with the prose Woolf encourages women to write, in which "the accent falls differently; the emphasis is on something hitherto ignored" (p. 390). Laurence's essay is important and enriching, incorporating those elements of Woolf's writing which are not really explored by other contributions in this volume.

Bethany Layne's "Great poets do not die: Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (2014) as metaphor for contemporary biofiction" discusses the literal understanding of feeling the presence and bringing back to life of the author in contemporary biographical prose. Maggie Gee's novel *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* is concerned with a fictional situation in which Virginia Woolf, still alive, resides in New York City in the company of a writer Angela and her daughter Gerda. The appearance of a real Virginia, with her real life and its intimate dimension, deftly referred to as the "dead author" from Benjamin's classic essay, challenges and questions all the critical perceptions and interpretations of Woolf's life and work. Jonathan Dee has described this kind of biofiction as a form of "literary graverobbing" (p. 399), and indeed, in spite of its contemporariness and modern setting, the essay does imply morbidity, seen as a strong attachment to a person followed by rejection of their death.

Layne links the novel with the general, public fascination with Woolf, her private life, her sexuality, and her suicide which are questioned and discussed within the context of biofiction as a genre. One may stop to wonder how far the writer's imagination goes with respect to the subject of her fascination and whether it borders on obsession? Yet, Gee's text, as Layne articulates, shows us that nothing in the context of Woolf can be taken for granted, and that new readers coming into contact with her work should reinvent her for themselves. Layne sees Gee's novel as a reaction to the work of many contemporary academics and fiction writers who try to recreate Woolf within their work according to their own ideas and interpretations of Woolf and the person as well as her perceptions which may not always be consistent with factual events. Such an approach underscores the subjectivity of Woolf's writing which modern writers, such as Gee try to emulate.

Catherine W. Hollis in "The Woolf girl: A mother-daughter story with Virginia Woolf and Lidia Yuknavitch" develops the intriguing idea of the maternal bond between Woolf as the "foremother" and modern female writers. Hollis discusses memoir-biofiction novels by Yuknavitch in which she explores themes only briefly touched on by Woolf shortly before her death, such as bodily physicality, violence, war, and literature. She persuasively describes the figure of the girl who is a mother to the adult woman-writer in both Woolf and Yuknavitch's works, seeing the body of the girl as a residue of trauma, sexuality, and political propaganda. Hollis argues that both Woolf and Yuknavitch "locate the source of their creativity in childhood moments of 'shock'", exposing the role of girlhood trauma in the process of becoming a writer. For Yuknavitch, Woolf is a figure of encouragement and a mentor, "the ultimate 'old dead girl' haunting her work" (p. 414). She argues that Woolf developed "a creative theory" that connects "the girl she was to the writer she becomes and that this creative theory both informs and is exceeded by Yuknavitch's own experiments in memoir and fiction" (p. 419).

The volume certainly affords a rich contribution to Woolf studies, holding a strong promise for feminist studies, gender and queer studies, and modernist studies by revisiting Woolf's works mainly from the feminist perspective. It also explores the neglected issue of twentieth-century (global) women writing, bringing it together in a comprehensive survey of texts. Although stylishly critical vocabulary is occasionally employed over-zealously, e.g., belaboring the terms related to Genette's theory (intertextual, hypertextual, paratextual), the book's writing is impressively eloquent. Perhaps the fact that Genette's work on paratexts exerts such an influence on the collection – also in practical terms – gives the impression that the idiosyncracies and contradictions of these essays are smoothed over by this overarching theory and narrative.

The success of the volume clearly stands on the claim that Woolf's legacy in postwar and contemporary literature is not only vivid but also global within a

planetary dimension, and the incredibly rich picture of such influences that it delivers. It is also to the editors' credit that they have assembled a truly divergent range of essays, acquiring contributions from an impressive wealth of critics, scholars, and writers across the globe.

The diversity of this twenty-three-essay volume risks a certain diffuseness not uncommon in edited collections of this sort, which *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and Contemporary Global Literature* nonetheless manages to avoid. However, such a vast collection of diverse approaches, drawing on a global perspective, risks treating some of its subjects superficially, and although this is not entirely the case of the discussed book, the way in which the 'other' writers are treated remains marginal, in juxtaposition with Woolf's overpowering dominance. Reading of these other novels and poems in the context of Woolf partly deprives them of their individuality, which works against the overarching objective in encouraging global and planetary readings.

The book clearly places Woolf on a pedestal, emphasizing her role in encouraging women to write, in addressing important issues such as feminism, gender equality, and pacifism, but none of these essays clearly addresses her failings in those spheres within which she is at times criticized. Taking into account the times when she lived and the notion of censorship to which her writing was subjected, Woolf is still sometimes accused of *not being enough*: not feminist enough, not anti-imperialist enough etc., as, e.g., in the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which she could have used the opportunity to afford greater voice to the suppressed Coolies wives, yet the book mentions them only twice and in a very offhand manner, showing that much remains to be done in this sphere (cf. Hickman 2014).

Importantly in a collection on Woolf, feminism and women's writing, most contributors are women which underscores Woolf's role of a trailblazer, paving the way for female writing which extends to this very collection of essays.

## REFERENCES

- Hickman, Valerie Reed. 2014. Clarissa and the Coolies wives: *Mrs Dalloway* figuring transnational feminism. *Modern Fiction Studies* 60(1). 52–77. DOI: [10.1353/mfs.2014.0001](https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2014.0001)